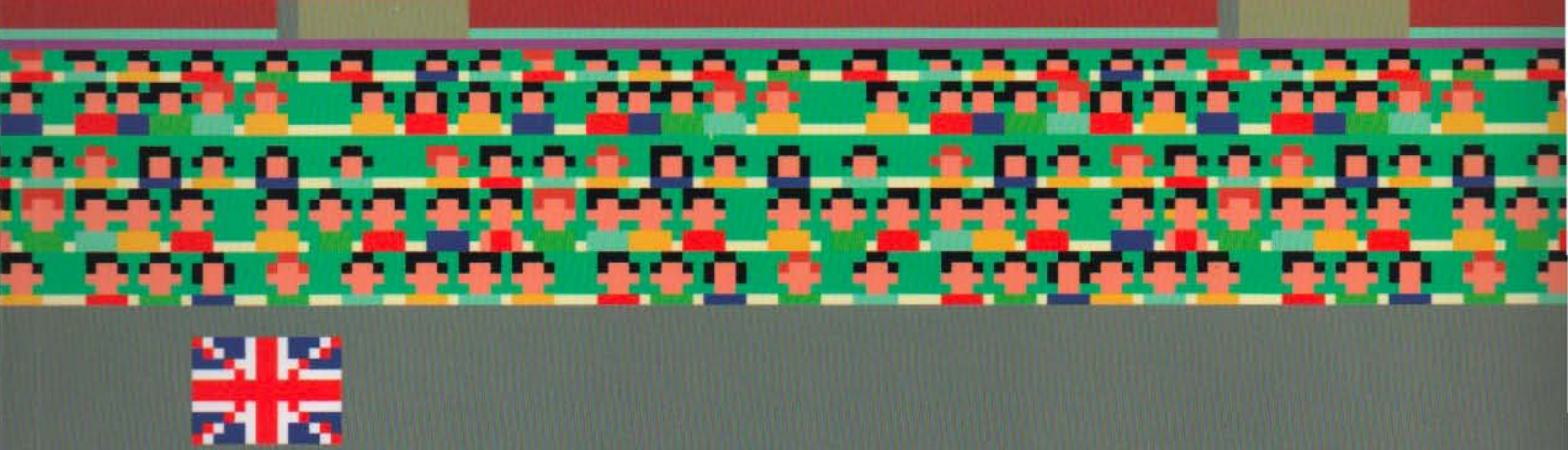




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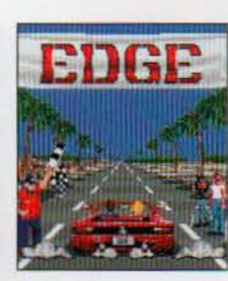
August 19, 1993 saw the arrival of a new kind of videogame magazine. Since then, much within these covers has changed but the publication's core components remain. Indeed it was interesting to note recently, when three of **Edge**'s four editors happened to be in the office simultaneously, that while undeniably distinct personalities (irreversibly scarred from years of having worked with each other, no doubt), all three continue to share the same outlook on videogaming.

It's not just the editors, of course. **Edge** is put together by individuals united by a genuine passion for videogames. The recognition of the potential within gaming, the belief that this pastime has the ability to outplay every other form of entertainment and rival 'higher' forms of cultural pursuit is, and always has been, at the very heart of the magazine.

So at times we're a little dry, a little solemn. That's only because sometimes things are serious; sometimes our pastime is threatened – by extensive industry consolidation; myopic, risk-averse publishing models; obsessive franchising; ill-informed mainstream press; and ill-advised governmental representatives – and we care too deeply about games and gaming to simply type you a monthly, Kirby-coloured version of the situation. We care too much to see you waste £40, $50 or ¥6,800 on substandard entertainment and not warn you against it. We care too strongly to sit here and not tell it like we see it. It just so happens that it's not always a pretty sight.

This month though, **Edge** (mostly) puts aside its scepticism. This issue is a celebration of gaming and **Edge**'s love of the form. You'll have to forgive the self indulgent nature of the edition and we'll take this opportunity to thank you for reading the mag for the past decade. Ten years ago, it wasn't for everyone. Ten years on, it still isn't.

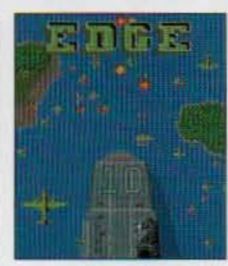


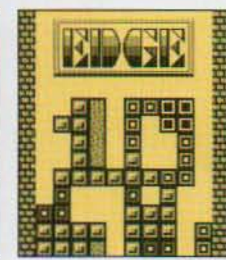





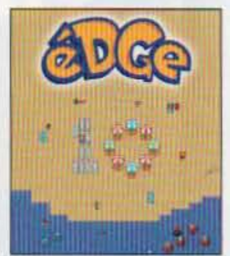












Features



TEN TOP TENS

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Perfect 1



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the 'still going' issue









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"Never feel sorry for a man who owns a plane."















Regulars

Testscreen


PlayStation Meeting 2003

Sony positions PSP as high-powered handheld

Ken Kutaragi unveils an impressive list of specs, positioning Sony's multimedia handheld closer to PlayStation2 than to PSone

Having initially announced the PlayStation Portable earlier this year at E3, Sony's Ken Kutaragi revealed its full specifications last month, at the company's annual PlayStation conference.

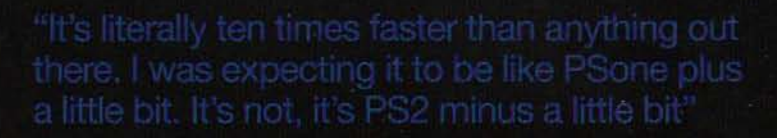
An impressive set of features suggest that the device will be closer in performance to PlayStation2 than, as had been expected, the PSone. At its core will be two MIPS R4000 CPUs; one that will be programmable for games, and another dedicated to the device's media playback capabilities. These core CPUs will be supported by two graphics cores; one that's similar to the Graphics Synthesizer in the PlayStation2 (and although it will only run at around half the clock speed of its PS2 counterpart, the smaller screen size will probably mean that there is little noticeable difference in performance) and a second that will offer a range of 3D curved surface and hardware 3D functionality. 7.1 audio playback, wireless LAN and Infra-Red (IrDA) wireless functionality, and an extension port to support future add-ons finish off an impressive package, that, thanks to USB 2.0 and Memory Stick slots should be compatible with products from the company's electronics division, such as the Vaio series.

The conference itself, which took place at the Takanawa Prince Hotel in Shinagawa, south of Tokyo, on June 29, was otherwise rather subdued, owing to Sony's poor recent financial results. Just a few weeks before, the company had announced a record fall across the group's operations, prompting analysts to criticise the company for a lack of focus. Significantly, as previously reported, Sony's electronics division is in decline, having failed to take advantage of the booming Plasma/LCD TV and home DVD recording markets. Consequently, it's being overtaken in these areas by companies such as Sharp, Pioneer, Panasonic and Hitachi.

Hence the introduction of the PSX in a bid to reverse the trend, and hence the renewed pressure on the company's games division. There was more bad news here though, as the company suffered a steep drop in year-on-year sales of PlayStation2 during the quarter ending June 30, and a decrease in overall revenues for the games division. Compared to the 4.59m units sold during the same quarter last year, this year, Sony only managed 2.65m. Consequently, revenue fell from ¥153.2bn (£800m) to ¥125.2bn (£650m).

At the conference, the company attributed this in part to a lack of originality on the platform as publishers have become unwilling to take risks; the annual PlayStation Awards given out every year to reward commercially successful games also reflected the difficult conditions of its domestic market. This year's awards saw a smaller list of winners. And although there was good news for the likes of Koei, whose *Sangokumusou* series almost single-handedly propped up the charts, there was disappointment for companies like Capcom, whose best-selling title, *Devil May Cry 2*, failed to reach sales of 1m copies.

The PSP announcement then, was fairly timely, and managed to divert attention away from an otherwise rather muted message. There are still areas of concern: notably that the device is unlikely to curtail any criticism of the company's perceived lack of focus. There's still no clear sense of what the console will look like, or what sort of market it will be targeted at, and in spite of Kutaragi-san's claim that it will be the "Walkman of the 21st Century", the original Walkman was a firmly focused device. The PSP appears to be, in contrast, a multi-functional digital hub. Still, publishers will be rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of region-protected software, while developers will be cheered by the fact that although its





PSP launch schedule

Software emulator: autumn 2003
Additional Library: winter 2003
Hardware development tools: spring 2004
Prototype: E3, May 2004
Line-up: Tokyo Game Show, September 2004
Worldwide launch: starting in Q4 2004



An extension port will allow the PSP to be hooked up to various add-ons. Digital cameras, GPS devices and digital tuners were suggested by Kutaragi-san







A PSP keyboard wasn't mentioned at the conference in Tokyo, but is certainly a possibility that would enable it to be used to send emails or surf the internet

performance will be comparable to PS2, developing games should be easier as it's fundamentally based on the PSone development process.

Easy writer

Edge's development sources were universally enthusiastic. One such developer agreed to talk but asked not to be named. "It is going to be simpler to program. The main CPU does most of the work – that runs all your game code and all your AI and stuff, and it looks to be the same speed as the PS2, maybe a little faster, we're not quite sure. Which means all the AI and physics should be comparable to most PS2 games, and it's going to be as easy to write as any machine. You just run your code and compile it and it should just work without much effort at all.

"The graphics side looks to be much more like PSone or Xbox; it looks a lot simpler to use. On the PS2 you had to get your head round programming everything. You had to learn the whole machine. PSP is definitely a lot easier. They've restricted access to a lot of the major chips in the system and done it through software instead. So it's sort of back to the old PSone days when you had to go through their provided libraries. Which people actually complained about in the days of PSone because it restricted them too much, but then they complained about the opposite on PS2. This looks like a compromise; they've made it easy to use but there's quite a lot of power there."

Edge's source went on to point out that because the PSP will be drawing fewer pixels than standard consoles, on a smaller screen, it ought to be capable of producing a similar graphical quality to that of PlayStation2, despite being comparably underpowered. And in spite of **Edge**'s concern that 7.1 channel sound support seems slightly redundant for portable gaming, **Edge**'s source dismissed our fears that such technology is unlikely to fulfil its potential through the machine's two stereo speakers or over a headphone.

"If you think about where Sony's going with this, 7.1 gives a lot more surround around the back of your head, and with headphones you get an essentially infinite number of speakers, so more rear channels is getting closer to true surround. It's not really overspecced, it's just an interesting approach."

"The main CPU does most of the work – that runs the game code and the AI – and it looks to be the same speed as the PS2, maybe faster"

Edge still has questions and reservations. The PSP's Wi-Fi functionality, for example, will be limited by the low penetration of the technology; in Japan, Wi-Fi hotspots are not numerous, even in Tokyo, and require a subscription to either one of the two main providers, Yahoo BB and NTT. There's also the question of battery lifetime and, ultimately, price; and how will the eventual design incorporate all those chips and cooling systems?

Nevertheless, Sony's hardware design and marketing nous is unparalleled, and **Edge**'s source is typical in his excitement: "Everyone I've spoken to has been floored by it. I can't see how anyone else can compete. It is literally ten times faster than anything out there. It's just so much better. I was expecting it to be like PSone plus a little bit. It's not, it's PlayStation2 minus a little bit."

PSP specifications

CPU: MIPS R4000 x 2; 32bit, 3D CG extended instructions, FPU, VFPU (Vector Unit) at 2.6Gflops, I and D cache, 2.6Gb/s bus bandwidth, 1-333MHz (1.2V), 128bit bus
RAM: 3Mb (eDRAM)
Other processors: Vector Floating Engine, Advanced 3D Graphics Engine
Video: AVC MPEG4 decoder, Main and baseline profile, Level 1 to 3, 2h in HQ, 4h in SQ
Graphics core: 3D curved surface + 3D polygon, Compressed textures, Hardware clipping, Morphing, Bone (up to 8), Hardware tessellator, Bezier, B-Spline (NURBS, 4 x 4 to 64 x 64 sub-divisions) 2Mb VRAM, 5.3Gb/s bus bandwidth, 664Mpizels/s pixel fill rate, maximum of 33m polygon/s (T&L)
Protection: region code, AES Crypto System
Media: Memory Stick (standard, Pro and Magic Gate); UMD 1.8Gb
Screen: Backlight, 24bit full color RGBA, 480 x 272 dots, 16:9 widescreen format
Interfaces: Analogue joystick, L & R triggers, 4 digital buttons, Start, Select
Communication: Built in wireless LAN (802.11) Wi-Fi and IrDA
Sound Core: VME (reconfigurable DSP) at 128bit bus, 166MHz (1.2V), 5Giga operation/s, CODEC and multiple effects (Synthesizer, effecter, etc)
Sound: 7.1 channel, 3D Sound, CODEC
Sound formats: ATRAC3 plus, AAC, MP3
Memory Stick: standard, Pro and Magic Gate
UMD drive (= x2 DVD-ROM drive): Laser diode at 660nm, Dual layer for a total of 1.8Gb, 11Mbps transfer rate, Shock Proof, Secure ROM by AES, Unique disc ID
IO: USB 2.0, AV in & Out, Extension port, Stereo headphone out
Battery: Li-ion (rechargeable)



There is speculation that PSP discs will be writeable, like minidiscs, raising the possibility that games could be copied onto discs quickly and easily from kiosks installed in retailers

Small is beautiful

As the big developers become ever more serious in a drive to reduce risk, a new breed of micro-studios is springing up to fill the demand for fun

Strange to consider that in an industry which likes to characterise itself as being all about creativity, some of its most talented employees are rejecting the day-to-day grind. As phrases like, "We felt they were driving the studio into the ground"; "We'd had enough of working for old heads who never play games anymore" and "We just left in order to do our own thing" demonstrate, as the videogame industry becomes more focused on the business side, a small but growing number of developers are setting up on their own.

No surprise there you might think, but instead of attempting the traditional high-concept, venture capital-funded startup plan, the latest approach is the micro-studio. Typically consisting of a handful of experienced friends, these back-to-basic pioneers are fiercely-independent and committed to doing things their own way.

"After many years in this volatile industry, the three of us decided the risks couldn't be any greater if we took control of our own destiny"

"The most important thing was the ability to spend our time doing what we wanted to do. Our aim is to work the way we want to work, at whatever strange hours that may be, and not get in the position of having to deal with the inefficiencies that can arise in a large team," explain **Scawen Roberts** and **Eric Bailey**, two animators who left Lionhead after collecting their bonuses for the long months of *Black & White* crunching. Together with musician Victor van Vlaardingen, they have been quietly working for the past couple of years on *Live for Speed* (www.liveforspeed.net), a hardcore physics-based racing simulation.





One round with *Black & White* was enough for Scawen Roberts and Eric Bailey, who left Lionhead to focus their attention on hardcore physics racer *Live for Speed*



The trio of ex-Infogrames and Rage developers who set up Moonpod have seen their debut game, *Starscape* downloaded more than 60,000 times

It's a slightly different story, albeit one with a similar outcome for **Mark Featherstone**, one of three developers to jump ship from Infogrames Sheffield, only to get caught up in the eventual demise of Rage Sheffield. Driven by a desire to create innovative, original games based on what they label "pure gameplay and heart-stopping action", the trio set up Moonpod (www.moonpod.com). Combining redundancy money, savings as well as house remortgaging, they self-funded the development of their first game, *Starscape*. Released five months ago, it's been downloaded over 60,000 times.

"After many years in this volatile industry, the three of us decided the risks couldn't be any greater if we took control of our own destiny instead of being the pawns of some faceless corporation," Featherstone says with some justification. "We'd also had enough of moving from town to town."

Doing it for themselves

The rub, of course, is making a game is just the first part. Whereas most jobbing developers can combine grumbling about the boss with picking up a wage slip at the end of the month, to survive, the micro-studio has to successfully combine the roles of developer, publisher, marketeer and retailer. And while conceptually it's easy to talk about the potential of viral downloads, pay-as-you-play demos and streaming electronic distribution, setting up such systems and getting punters to actually punch in their credit card details for an immaterial product is another matter entirely.

"In truth, we haven't sold anywhere near enough copies online," confesses **Michael Michael**, the graphics and sound half of micro-developer PomPom (www.pompom.org.uk). Set up with fellow ex-Argonaut coder Miles Visman, PomPom's past couple of years are a stark warning to those who see the micro-movement as a simple panacea for the wider ills of the industry.

At first, things went well with the studio's first game, the *Defender*-inspired *Space Tripper* gaining rave reviews, notably from **Edge** and 'PC Gamer'. Michael won't reveal the number of paying downloads, instead coyly suggesting it's somewhere in the range 1,000–10,000. Whatever the number, it wasn't enough to keep a two-man team afloat so hoping to capitalise on the press acclaim, PomPom signed a deal with a US publisher in July 2001 to get the game a retail release. "That was where the pain started," Michael says. "We never saw penny from that. As newbies we were suckered and have only recently managed to release the game from the contract."

Thankfully with the rights to *Space Tripper* regained and new game, *Mutant*





Storm – inspired by that other Williams classic *Robotron* – doing well, PomPom is looking more healthy. It has just dipped its toes back into the retail water, signing another deal, this time with reputable US specialist publisher GarageGames.

"It knows the marketing side of the business a whole lot better than we do," Michael explains. "Even with online/downloadable games, the marketing side plays a bigger part than outright game quality. It sucks, but that's the way it is."

Spheres of influence

There are many reasons to be hopeful about the impact of the micros. Not only are they enthusiastic about the games they make, the diffusion of broadband networks in general, combined with the additional of connectivity for consoles, means their influence will grow. They certainly don't seem to lack ambition either as nascent deals to release games on PlayStation2 and Xbox are being discussed.

"I definitely believe the model is sustainable," argues Moonpod's Mark Featherstone. "Obviously downloadable games sell in far lower quantities compared to retail releases but as a developer you're getting a 90 per cent rather than a five per cent return and the game will sell for months, if not years."

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing them will be the temptation to expand with success, becoming more like the companies they left. Roberts and Bailey are adamant however that growing the *Live for Speed* team too much would be counterproductive. "In a way it would put us back to square one – just what we left in order to do our own thing," they say. "There's sometimes pressure from the *Live for Speed* community for fast results, but we think that by taking our time and producing quality, we should be able to go on as we are now." Now there's a novel approach to making games. **Edge** hopes it rubs off on the big boys too.



Once of Argonaut, the two-man team behind PomPom's *Space Tripper* (top left and right) and *Mutant Storm* (above) is back on track after a publishing deal went wrong



Microsoft keeps Japan updated

In the absence of any big game news, Microsoft focuses attention on Xbox Live and looks ahead to Xbox 2



Despite Microsoft's convictions that cost-cutting will trigger sales, Live will only prove a success with the right software

Peter Moore, who stepped down as president of Sega of America in January to take up his position as corporate vice president, faced a tough sell at his first Japanese Xbox Conference. Xbox sales in the region remain depressed, and nervous developers are deserting the console. It was nonetheless a convincing display from Moore, who impressed journalists with his enthusiasm and his willingness to answer frank questions about Xbox's long-term Japanese prospects.



A global branding strategy is one thing, but Microsoft may discover that people are more likely to find it good to play together when not under the glare of Xbox green lights

"Microsoft may have resigned itself to Japanese failure for this generation. Any Xbox 2 designs will do more to cater to Japanese tastes"



Although there were presentations from Tecmo (*Ninja Gaiden*), Bizarre Creations (*Project Gotham Racing 2*) and Level 5 (*True Fantasy Live Online*), there were no major announcements to buoy Japanese spirits.

Microsoft is pinning its hopes in the region on the online aspect of its console, having cut subscription prices to ¥4,980 (£26) and promising more than 30 compatible titles by the end of the year. Currently the service has attracted 8 per cent of Japanese Xbox owners, but many of the games that were trumpeted as strong Live titles have so far proved unpopular – *MotoGP*, for example, has sold only 2,000 copies in the region. Although Moore was keen to promote Xbox Live Alert, which allows Live users to receive invitations to play over mobile phone, PDA or MSN Messenger networks, much of the technology demonstrated is not scheduled for release in Japan.

This focus on online play forms the crux of Xbox's new global brand identity. Leading with the tag line "It's good to play together", Microsoft hopes to establish a world identity as the console dedicated to online play. Moore proclaimed, "We are clearly putting a stake in the ground and saying Xbox is about the social aspects of gaming".

It remains to be seen if online is the secret to unlocking the Japanese market. Perhaps more crucial for Xbox expansion is the announcement of two new game series. A Platinum Collection will reduce the price of best selling titles, but even more in tune with local consumers may be the World Collection Series. This will be a line-up of US and European games rushed to the Japanese market with very limited localisation. Many Japanese Xbox owners bought the machine specifically to access a more western range of games, and over 75 per cent of owners have been surveyed as being keen to see Japanese releases made as soon as possible after their western debut.

Overall, however, the company may have resigned itself to Japanese failure for this generation. During the question and answer session at the end of the conference, Microsoft representatives, while ruling out any smaller redesign of the current console, revealed that any Xbox 2 designs would do more to cater to Japanese aesthetic tastes.

In a related announcement, Microsoft has confirmed that it has signed an agreement with ATI to provide graphics technologies for use in future Xbox products. The deal may mean that Microsoft will not renew its relationship with current chip supplier nVidia. Relations between the two companies had been strained from the start, sparking long-running dispute over the costing of the chip.









Bizarre Creations presented unreleased footage of the new Yokohama setting. Its attention to detail has extended to hiring DJs from the local radio station and licensing Japanese pop hits

GameCube production halted temporarily

Nintendo forced to put console manufacture on hold to clear inventory backlog

There were worrying signs for the future of the GameCube console as Nintendo was recently forced to take the decision to cease the production of the console until the autumn, in order to allow the company to clear a backlog of inventory. The move reflects waning interest in the console, but president Satoru Iwata blamed the decision on the fact that gamers don't have the time required by increasingly sophisticated and lengthy games. In spite of the dramatic decision, the company still expects to reach sales of 6 million units by the end of March next year, counting on increased interest over Christmas.

It's further bad news for the company, which recently saw Argos withdraw the console from its current catalogue in the UK, but in spite of the underperformance of GameCube, Nintendo still managed to increase its first quarter profits this financial year. Thanks to the increasing popularity of the GBA and GBA SP, which sold 3.24 million units during the period, the company posted respectable first quarter net profits of ¥11.5bn (£60m) for the three months to June 30, 2003.

In addition, the company unveiled its forthcoming software line up and announced several new initiatives to try to get GameCube back on track at a recent analyst briefing in Japan. Among the new titles to be unveiled were a new *Donkey Kong* title, a new *Legend of Zelda* title, and a GameCube version of Treasure's magnificent GBA title, *Made in Wario*. The new *Donkey Kong* will be developed by Namco, and there's been speculation that it could be a rhythm action title, while the new *Zelda* game is the title featuring a non-cel-shaded Link that **Edge** had expected to see at Jump Festa last December.

NCL also announced that it would be launching new GameCube accessories next year, as well as a new franchise that will apparently alleviate the fact that the Pokémon boom is past its peak. And finally the company unveiled a Japanese loyalty points scheme similar to Nintendo of Europe's Stars system. The company expects a million members in its first year though whether these measures will be sufficient to offset the apparent apathy towards GameCube remains to be seen.

In related news, Kirby creator, Masahiro Sakurai, announced in his 'Weekly Famitsu' column that he would be leaving his post at Nintendo firstparty developer, HAL Laboratory.



Nintendo was keen to point out that GameCube production is only on hold temporarily, but it's not a good sign

Women take centre stage

The London Chapter of the International Game Developers Association re-launches with a round-table discussion on the role of women in gaming

Attended by nearly 150 artists, designers, coders, producers and academics, the London meeting proved the most successful chapter launch in IGDA history.

The visual focus of the night was provided by a demo of *Rome: Total War*. After their dramatic presentation, the Creative Assembly team were subjected to a grilling from the audience which proved rather more technical than they might be used to from similar press events. A moral dimension was brought to the evening by artist and designer Tim Hull. Currently organising a globe-circling research trip on regional gaming traditions, he has joined forces with Unicef to raise funds for children who are denied the opportunity to play by exploitative working practices. See www.unicef.org.uk/right-to-play/ for more information and to donate.

The main event was, however, the debate on women and their involvement with the games industry. Alongside **Edge** on the all-female panel were Violet Berlin (Game-Pad presenter and founder of WhizzBang TV), Nina Kristenson (co-founder of Just Add Monsters, developers of *Kung Fu Chaos*), Charu Gupta (programmer at SCEE's London studios) and Judi Spiers (freelance producer).

Discussion ranged widely over issues of recruitment, hardware design, game characters and PR junkets. However, the questions that raised the most heated responses were those concerning the viability of a pink Barbie-style PlayStation, and the likelihood of a 50-50 gender split ever proving achievable. If any consensus was reached, it was that whatever shifts and improvements might be made in the future, there is already a wealth of content available which could appeal to a wider cross section of women. However, conservative publishers and unimaginative marketing mean that many potential female consumers remain unaware of products they might enjoy.

The London IGDA chapter plans to meet every two months, and is open to all those with an interest in professional game development. Details of forthcoming events will be available at www.igda.org/london



After ten years presenting games on television, Violet Berlin is still the UK's most recognisable female gamer

CUTTINGS



Total War on TV

A new prime time BBC TV series is to incorporate Creative Assembly's *Total War* engine to depict historic military conflicts. 'Time Commanders' will air on BBC2 this autumn, and allows teams made up of members of the public to pit their wits against famous commanders from history in recreations of celebrated battles. The producer of the show, Lion TV is also producing a one off special for The History Channel, called 'Total War: Commanders'. According to Creative's Tim Ansell, talks are also underway that may see the engine used in another US TV programme.

French developers given government money

The French Government is offering four million Euro (£2.9m) to help aspiring game developers turn their ideas into reality. The Ministry of Culture has come up with the scheme to help French developers cope with the current state of increased market competition. The scheme will see the government contribute up to 40 per cent of development costs, on the proviso that the developer is French and the game developed in France. It has also made clear that it will not fund overtly violent or sexually explicit games. The announcement will certainly provide independent developers with a timely boost, but it's debatable whether the measure will enhance the industry's l ong-term prospects.

Sony overturns mod-chip ruling

Sony has won an appeal against an Australian Federal Court decision that had dismissed the company's claims that it was unlawful to sell and install PS2 mod-chips (reported in **E**115). This recent ruling outlaws the sale of mod-chips under new anti-circumvention provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, establishing that region coding exists to prevent or inhibit copyright infringement. Australian consumer association, ACCC, reacted negatively to the new ruling, arguing that it would prevent consumers from playing games legitimately bought overseas.

Core loses Tomb Raider

Eidos maintains profit expectations and gets a nice new logo, but the UK loses Lara



Following the turbulence surrounding the release of *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*, Eidos has announced that it is shifting development of the series away from Core, developers of all six previous Lara Croft games. Production for the 2004 follow-up will instead go to US developer Crystal Dynamics, maker of the *Soul Reaver* series. Eidos owns all *Tomb Raider* intellectual property rights, and has stated that the move is in recognition of its need to "enhance the value and maximise the commercial opportunity of one of its key franchises".

At a time when many UK development houses are struggling, the loss of such a globally recognised gaming icon to an overseas developer is particularly dispiriting. The decision was taken hard on the heels of the resignation of Core's managing director, Jeremy Heath-Smith. Eidos is now in the process of "evaluating the Core Design studio's on-going direction and contribution as part of the Group's overall development capabilities." In light of the failure of Core's non-Lara titles – such as *Herdy Gerdy* and *Project Eden* – to make a commercial impact, the future of the studio looks bleak.



Eidos claims the new look reflects its company raising the quality bar and it comes right after an uncharacteristic lapse in the form of the latest *Tomb Raider* venture

Despite three years in development, *The Angel of Darkness* was subject to repeated delays, and it has been widely acknowledged that the game was released in a somewhat unfinished state. Eidos was under enormous pressure to ship the game before the end of its financial year, and has now confirmed that all but 500,000 units made the June deadline which should enable it to meet its profit forecasts.

Eidos has recently rebranded, unveiling a purple arrowhead which it hopes will better communicate its "sharp, streamlined and focused" approach to publishing. Its new tagline proudly proclaims the company to be to be "Committed to the Gameplay Experience". It's an assertion that may not carry much weight with the consumers who have just suffered the consequences of Eidos' decision to put short-term profits before game quality control.

Another bad month for UK developers

Three UK independents forced to take drastic measures to cope with difficult market conditions

There was more bad news for UK independent developers this month as one UK studio seemed set to close, another announced significant layoffs, and another pledged a round of restructuring and cost reductions. *State of Emergency* developer, VIS Entertainment announced the closure of one of its studios; *Fire Warrior* developer Kuju Entertainment pledged to cut costs in an announcement to investors; and Croydon-based HotGen Studios looks set to close altogether.



The developers of *Fire Warrior* (left, and see p45) and *State of Emergency* (right) are the latest developers to suffer in the face of the current difficult market conditions

State of emergency

Despite having sold a million copies of *State of Emergency*, VIS was forced to announce a restructuring that saw the closure of its Isle of Wight studio with the loss of 18 jobs. More redundancies were expected across the company's operations in London, Dunfermline and Dundee in a bid to reduce the company's operating costs. "Every developer is having to look very hard at their operating costs and their ability to bring products to market profitably," stated chairman, **Ken Lewandowski**. "VIS is no exception. We are concentrating our efforts on our key products, about whose success we are confident."

Kuju Entertainment, meanwhile, has announced a programme of restructuring and cost reductions due to delays in the signing of two projects. According to a statement from chairman **Jonathan Newth** at the company's AGM, "The restructuring and cost reduction will have to be deeper than was previously envisaged and this will be accelerated in coming weeks." The statement also pointed to the fact that publishers are scaling back the number of titles that they are commissioning, as reported last issue.

And finally, reports are coming in that HotGen Studios is closing its doors – in spite of **Edge**'s reassurance in **E**125 that the company was going strong. As **Edge** goes to press the company has apparently laid off its development staff with the exception of a single team which will remain to finish a GBA project that's near completion. HotGen was founded in 1988 by ex-Probe frontman, Fergus McGovern, who has yet to make an official statement regarding the situation.

Space Invaders 25th Anniversary

Gaming returns to the womb to celebrate the birthday of one of its founding fathers







Despite the enduring appeal of lasers, free-play cabinets and girls in knee-braces, Edge has decided against hiring Taito's party planners for its own birthday celebrations

In the quarter century since its debut, the social impact of *Space Invaders* has become part of gaming lore. The police hustling captivated children back to school, the Bank of Japan making more ¥100 coins to replace those swallowed by the hungry tables. Taito, in turn, having to hire construction trucks to haul the tons of loose change back to its headquarters. It's slightly perplexing then, that it's turned its back on the game's mainstream heritage, choosing a rather more eclectic manner of celebrating its 25th birthday.

Taking over the Womb club in Shibuya for the night, the company invited a range of performance artists to conceive displays inspired by *Space Invaders*. One man came dressed as an extraterrestrial invader, but rather than approaching the assembled crowd in a ceremonial zigzag of slowly approaching death, he composed a message of calligraphic congratulations. A second performer attempted a live-action recreation of the game, ascending to the roof to burst three large balloons and release the smaller balloons they contained. **Edge** wonders if he took a wrong turn on his way to the *Asteroids'* birthday party.

To coincide with the birthday, Taito has released a *Space Invaders Anniversary* edition for the PS2, which includes a selection of versions of the game, including its earliest monochrome incarnation. The budget pricing of the title (¥1,480 (£8)) has contributed to sales of over 10,000 in the first week of its Japanese release.

What will perhaps prove more popular is the new range of merchandise Taito has announced. After years of refusing the game license to manufacturers eager to cash in on a piece of gaming heritage, the company has announced tie-ins with clothing companies, Vans footwear and Casio watches. Just in time for **Edge**'s own birthday...

Recently Reviewed

Edge brings you a rundown of last issue's review scores

Title	Platform	Publisher	Developer	Score
Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	GBA	Nintendo	Intelligent Systems	8
Metal Slug 3	PS2	SNK Playmore	In-house	8
Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire	GBA	Nintendo	Game Freak	8
Viewtiful Joe	GC	Capcom	In-house	8
Ka 2: Let's Go to Hawaii	PS2	SCEI	Zoom	7
Virtual-On Marz	PS2	Sega	Hitmaker	7
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	PS2	SCEA	SCEI	6
Suikoden III	PS2	Konami	In-house	6
Initial D Special Stage	PS2	Sega	Sega Rosso	5
Jet Grind Radio	GBA	THQ	Vicarious Visions	4
MegaMan Network Transmission	GC	Capcom	In-house	4
The Great Escape	Xbox, PS2, PC	SCi	Pivotal Games	4
Dino Crisis 3	Xbox	Capcom	In-house	3
Kirby Air Ride	GC	Nintendo	HAL Laboratory	3



Advance Wars 2



Metal Slug 3

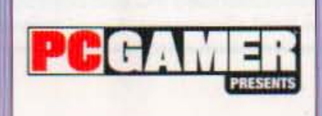


Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire



Viewtiful Joe

CUTTINGS



PC Gamer launches budget game range

Future Publishing's 'PC Gamer' is to team up with the resurrected software publisher Mastertronic, to launch a new range of budget games under the 'PC Gamer Presents' label. Games in the series, which will all have been awarded a review score of 80 per cent or over by the magazine, will retail for £10. The first games to be signed up to the label have yet to be announced as **Edge** goes to press, but Mastertronic is in discussions with various leading publishers, including Codemasters, Electronic Arts, Activision, Ubi Soft and Take 2. It expects to deliver between four and eight titles from October through to Christmas with more to follow in the new year.

MacLean fires up Ignition

Industry veteran and *Dropzone* creator, Archer MacLean has joined Ignition Entertainment as creative director, bringing his development team, Awesome Developments with him to create titles exclusively for Ignition. Awesome has recently been responsible for titles such as *Jimmy White's Cueball 2*, *Cueball World*, and MacLean's 26-year track record includes the creation of the seminal *IK+* and *Dropzone*. MacLean will also be responsible for signing up new thirdparty titles, the first of which will be *Super Farm* from Asobo Studio, which is due for release on PlayStation2 at the end of September.

CESA reveals state of the industry

Japan's Computer Entertainment Suppliers Association (CESA), has released its annual white paper, containing a detailed overview of the performance of the videogame sector over the course of 2002. Its findings continue the previous year's trend of an increasingly difficult market, intensifying the pressure on publishers to produce global hits in order to recoup development costs. Overall shipments of software and hardware dropped from ¥1.45tn (£7.6bn) in 2001 to ¥1.26tn (£6.6bn). Other figures show declining revenue from hardware sales, due in part to continued price cuts and slowing sales of some systems. Perhaps the most worrying finding is that the number of 'regular' gamers in Japan has fallen from 25.5m in 2001 to 23.6m. Visit www.CESA.or.jp for more information about the report.

Ringing up 3D

www.superscape.com
http://games.superscape.com

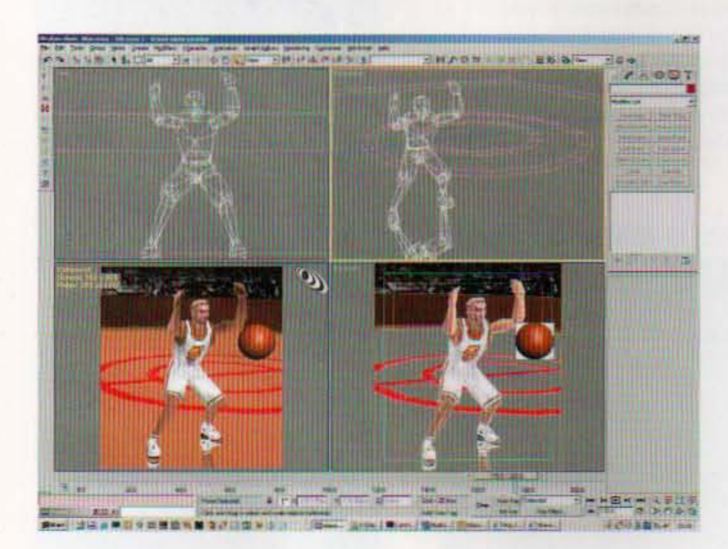
It revolutionised PC and console games, and according to UK tech company Superscape, the third dimension is now poised to take mobile gaming to another level



Though not coded by the team behind Climax's console version, one of the first licensed games from Superscape uses THQ's popular MotoGP brand to attract eyeballs and wallets

People often tell me mobile phone screens are too small for 3D, but that's the point," enthuses **Andy Tait**, business development vice president of 3D specialist Superscape. "3D content brings depth to these tiny screens," he adds triumphantly, while guiding a small polygonal character through an environment populated by towering skyscrapers.

As a technology demo, it's certainly an apt metaphor for Superscape. Dwarfed on one hand by handset manufacturers and chip companies who provide the underlying silicon and by the network operators on the other, this tiny UK company has danced around these billion-dollar behemoths, focusing on the thing that matters to all of them: content. Just as in the console space, so in the world of mobile, people are starting to realise that games can sell hardware.









Swerve Preview allows developers to preview their game as it will look running on the client engine, from within 3ds max (top). This smooth basketball game strips the essentials of the sport down to two players per team but remains remarkably playable

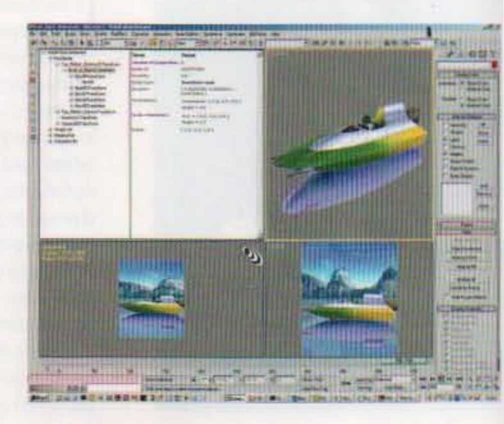
Strange thing is though, Superscape doesn't even make any games. A pure technology company, it's created tools which enable mobile developers to make small downloadable 3D games, designed to run on phones without dedicated 3D hardware. The games' diminutive file size, typically between 100-200k for engine and assets, is vital both for ease of download and storing games on the phones.

Called Swerve, the tech comes in two parts. The first is a development environment which sits on top of Discreet's 3ds max modelling package. This allows developers to create games quickly as well as using advanced file compression technology to reduce the file size as much as possible. The other part is the Swerve i3D graphics client, which runs on the phone. And that's how Superscape expected to make its money, licensing the technology to handset manufacturers, chip designers or network operators. Instead, out of necessity, it's found itself becoming a mobile publisher.

For, having signed a deal that will see Swerve integrated into millions of future Siemens phones – and with more high profile deals on the way – it's ended up playing the middleman to ensure a game range is available. "We even took a stand at E3 this year; it was wall-to-wall meetings all day long," Tait explains, with the look of a man who actually enjoyed the experience.

The result is an emerging catalogue of Swerve games including 3D motorbike racing, 3D basketball, 3D arcade flight sims, 3D sniper games, a 3D MP3-based beatmania screensaver and 3D chess, which in addition to its graphical flourishes has hardcore AI credential, having been coded by no less than two Russian grandmasters.

But if it doesn't seem much compared to, say Nokia's razzmatazz, Tait doesn't seem too concerned. "I think it's a great time for the industry in general," he says. "N-Gage has been a real catalyst. It's crystallised people's attention on games. Right now we're just letting our tools out gently, but when the handset manufacturers start pushing their new devices out, it's really going to take off."







One of the Swerve tool components, called Spy, enables developers to break down the different components of their 3D scene to ensure optiminal file compression (top)

All in the standard

One of the reasons for Superscape's success in the area of mobile 3D graphics is its work setting up a key 3D Java standard. Catchily called JSR 184, this is the programming interface for defining how 3D games and other 3D applications work on mobile phones. Also on the committee with Superscape, were chip designers ARM (who partner with Superscape to sell Swerve), Nokia, Siemens, Motorola and Vodafone. JSR 184 means the various parts of the mobile phone industry can standardise their technology. And while it's an open standard any 3D technology company can support, Superscape and ARM clearly believe that their proximity to the standard mean the Swerve JSR 184 implementation will be the first to be released as well as the best performing version. It's already been licensed by handset manufacturers and mobile operating system developers.

www.discreet.com

The most from max

Another year, another version, but with the release of 3ds max 6, Discreet is quietly changing the way it does business

There's something overwhelming about the ceaseless labour of game tools industry. Locked into a business model that requires a Sisyphean approach to product releases – constant minor upgrades backed by major version upgrades every 12-18 months – it's activity which leaves observers tired just watching. More importantly, it can also impact on the efficiency of users. With game production cycles becoming increasingly time-pressured, it's not surprising many studios don't want to add the risk of upgrading their arts tools and retraining users to projects which already boast more than enough risk.

And it's this kind of issue which is subtly changing the way 3ds max vendor Discreet is doing business. First up was the Sparks subscription program, which offers users access to a constant stream of max plug-ins, as well as an umbrella of better support. But there's been an impact on the release cycle for max itself too.

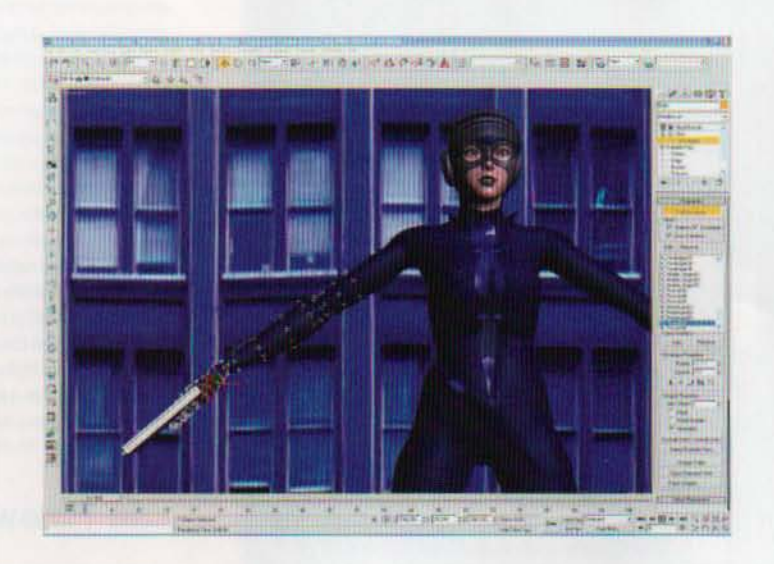
"Customers have been continually asking for shorter release cycles, to give them a quicker implementation into their production pipeline with the minimum amount of downtime spent learning new software. That's exactly what we have delivered," explains **Nick Manning**, Discreet's European software territory manager, of the relatively swift emergence of latest version, 3ds max 6.

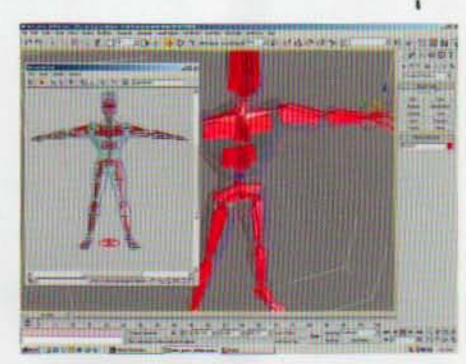
Of course, new features do matter as well. Manning is keen to big up changes which make it easier to manage the different elements in complex 3D scenes. Known as the schematic view system, this has been rewritten from the ground up. With help from Sega Japan, users can get more information about the scene elements; everything from object properties, materials, controllers, modifiers and hierarchies, to non-visible object relationships such as the multiple instancing of single objects. Full exposure of the schematic view system to the max's internal scripting language, MAXscript, also provides the flexibility for developers to extend the information they can extract from the scenes.

Another interesting shift for version 6, particularly with an eye to future consoles, is the improvements to max's bezier patch and spline modelling tools. Generally used in movie special effects, these techniques are more powerful than traditional polygon modelling but because they are less flexible, few game developers have switched to using them yet. Discreet hopes to change this with the enhancements it's made to improve patch modelling workflow and spline cage generation tools. This should help artists create scalable in-game characters, which are much more efficient in terms of the system bandwidth they use. This is something thought to be crucial both for Sony's PSP portable device as well as PlayStation3.

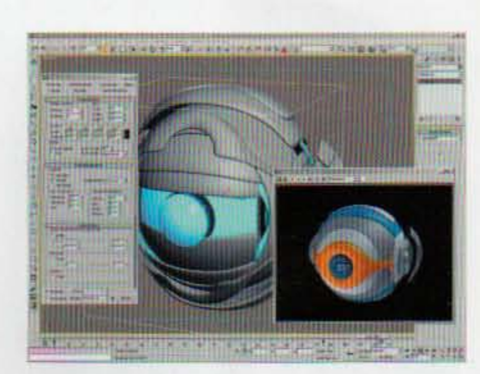
More max productivity tweaks include the ability for level editors to use vertex painting tools to paint game-specific attributes such as surface friction and damage values directly onto their models, making the process more intuitive. A similar technique means artists can now explore different combinations of additive radiosity lighting interactively, in a manner that lets them see how the effects will be implemented in-game. And there's much, much more under the bonnet. Space constraints mean the realtime shader prototyping viewport with run-time shading language, independent XML access and distributed render-to-texture features can only be mentioned.

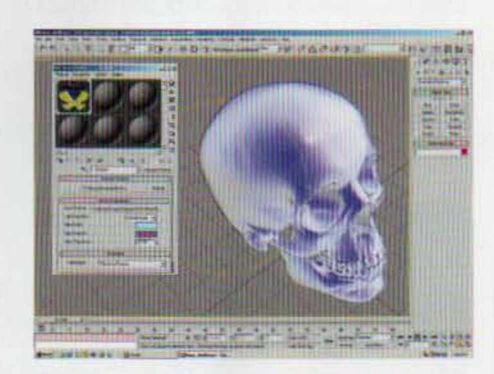
"In a nutshell, there's a lot of new features for game developers to get excited about," ends Manning. "All they need to do is just give us a call and we'll come and show them."





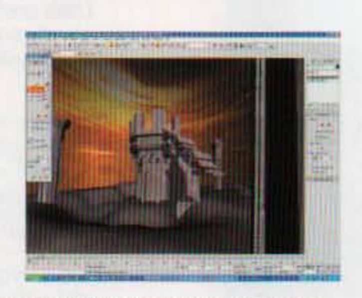
One example of 3ds max 6's new schematic view shows all the attributes making up the skeleton's bone structured displayed in notes above the image





3ds max 6 supports Microsoft's High Level Shading Language as defined in DirectX 9 and includes a new dynamic user interface which creates the material editor components dynamically



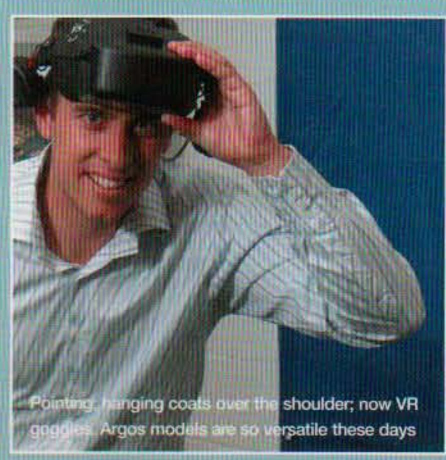


First introduced in max 5, Discreet has extended the power of its reactor element, which uses the core Havok physics library, enabling both soft and rigid-body dynamics (left). One of the new features for 3ds max 6 is the ability for artists to paint colour and custom attribute information onto models using vertex painting tools (right)

OUT THERE

REPORTAGE



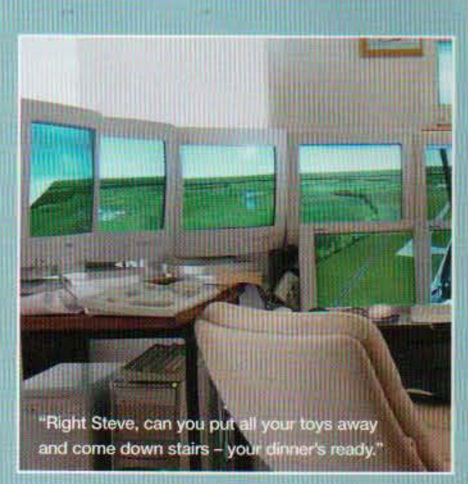


Pointing, hanging coats over the shoulder; now VR goggles. Argos models are so versatile these days

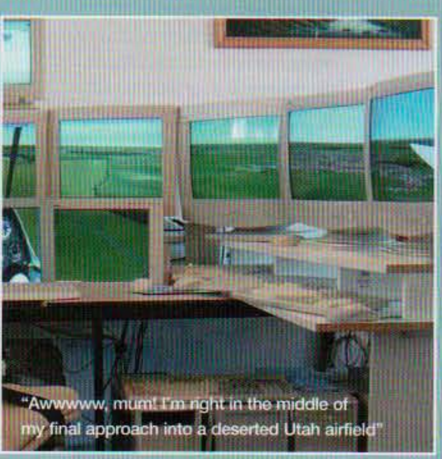


Are you good enough to return an Agassi serve? More importantly, can you look this cool doing it?





"Right Steve, can you put all your toys away and come down stairs – your dinner's ready."



"Awwwww, mum! I'm right in the middle of my final approach into a deserted Utah airfield"

01 Virtual Tennis

UK: Remember Tim Henman? The plucky Brit who's a national hero for a week and a half every summer, but courageously anonymous for the rest of the year? Come on – short dark hair, cold dead eyes, unnerving smile, housewives' favourite? That's the fella. Based on the HawkEye statistical system that premiered at Wimbledon 2003, HawkEye VR let's you live his life; pluckily attempting to return shots from a far better player, and clenching your fist in mock passion when you win a point, even though you're already two sets down. Pull on the headset and you're in a (simplistic, but effective) polygonal representation of centre court. A few seconds later and Federer's firing serves straight at you – the exact same serves he served on centre court. Swing the sensor-equipped racket in the right place and you'll return them. So the rally will continue, following the shot pattern of whatever game data HawkEye's working from, right up until the rally ends or you mess up. The idea is that, at some point in the near future, Hawkeye VR will make it into the arcades, or (in the more distant future) possibly into set-top boxes beaming up-to-the-second game data into your living room. Now, that'd be quite in-tennis. Does that work? Ah, it's good enough.

02 Plane windows

Holland: While the story above might herald the return of the headset to gaming, they're still too bulky, unwieldy and low-resolution for PC simulation enthusiasts. Enter Wideview (www.wideview.it), a utility for *Microsoft Flight Simulator* which creates virtual cockpits from multiple monitors. It offers "virtually no limit" on how many PCs can be networked together, something Steve Ferris obviously kept in mind when constructing his Ask21 Glider Simulation. Nine PCs and 13 monitors make up the impressive arrangement, although **Edge** might whisper that the idea of keeping nine PCs from bluescreening for more than a few minutes could only come from someone with their head in the clouds. Find more shots of different setups at http://members.chello.nl/~s.ferris/

Soundbytes

"I signed the NDA so where's the game?"
Justin Timberlake visits Bungie, and can't wait to see *Halo 2*

"I left wrestling to come home to Utah and be with my family and I find myself in the biggest battle of my life – to save my identity"
Wrestler Maxx Payne

"The only thing we can attribute that to is that the gamers were not happy with the latest version of the *Tomb Raider* videogame, which is our core audience"
Paramount distribution president Wayne Lewellen comments on the box-office failure of the 'Tomb Raider' sequel

"Don't forget, before Lara there'd been a short Italian plumber and a blue fox"
Core's Jeremy Heath-Smith tries to educate 'Loaded' readers with his personal, concise version of videogame history

03 Love rat cheats on videogame shocker

US: They're the golden couple of celebrity videogaming, and so well suited; both gorgeous, both revolutionary, both angelic, both offering some kind of aural heaven, and both packing a powerful pistol. Hell, Justin's love for *Halo* is well-documented – when the ex-N*Syncer broke his foot at the end of last year, his comfort course was a couple of Xboxes, a couple of widescreen TVs, and a large dose of multiplayer link-up. But now he's been linked with *Postal 2*, specifically via his collaboration with the Black Eyed Peas on their excellent track, 'Where Is The Love?' The promo for the Gaye-style-lament features two gaming enthusiasts indulging in the Running With Scissors shocker. Now, while neither of them is *actually* Justin, the man isn't shy of using videos as extended, obvious metaphors – see 'Cry Me A River' for details. So, Mr Timberlake, where *is* the love? Feel free to email and point it out.

04 Payne vs Payne

US: The common pun can be a dangerous thing. Why, only last week **Edge** almost put its eye out with a feisty Out There header, etc. Perhaps someone should have told 3D Realms who now finds itself in a $10m lawsuit over its tortured and slightly-rubbish hero, Max Payne. It turns out it wasn't the only one to come up with a similar nominal meme: born Darryl Peterson, **Maxx Payne**'s brief stint in WCW gave him mild, lycra-clad fame amongst young rednecks the world over. When he briefly moved to WWF in 1996, he changed his ring persona to 'Man Mountain', who wore garish shirts and played an electric guitar. Shortly after that he retired, but kept his first pseudonym – only to find it snatched from him, phonetically at least, by some power hungry game-geeks, eager to find a name for their dark, brooding detective. And not just the name either. "Part of my persona is the film noir look," the massive, bearded, tattooed, long-haired ex-wrestler told 'The Salt Lake Tribune'. The case continues.

05 Play less

UK: There's nothing like a good book. And the latest arrival in Resolven Library, Neath, really is nothing like a good book. It's a PlayStation2, provided to the library by Network Q, as compensation for the disruption its rally caused when it roared through Resolven earlier this year. The idea is that kids'll come for the console, but stay for the literature. Naturally, not everyone's so happy. "Literature gives you a lifetime of pleasure," local councilor **Valdo Funning** told the 'Western Mail'. "I wouldn't have that if I had been playing on a PlayStation". Wouldn't you, Valdo? Perhaps you're too single-minded. **Edge** doesn't think it has to be either/or, and if this helps kids see books as part of a balanced entertainment schedule – or parents see videogames as part of one, too – then that has to be a positive thing.

Data Stream Edge history Special

Number of soiled pants received by **Edge** over its ten year history: **1**
Number of permanent editorial staff on **Edge** over past ten years: **31**
Longest serving editorial member: **Terry Stokes**
Number of times **Edge**'s editorial staff met their deadlines: **4**
Number of dead foxes to appear on **Edge**'s cover: **0**
Number of times Lara has appeared on **Edge**'s cover: **0**

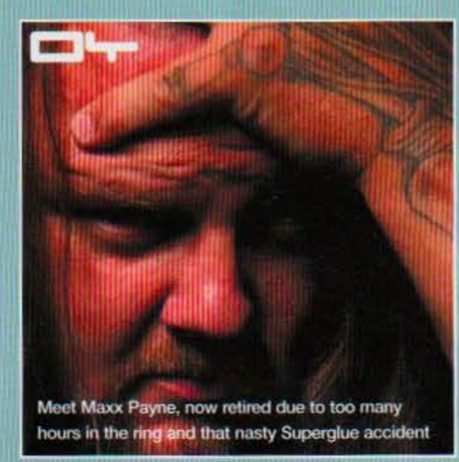


Justin impresses girls by playing games and doing impressions of Michael Jackson. Shamon Mutha...



Watchu talking about? Gary Coleman: still trying to persuade Hollywood to remake 'The Time Bandits'





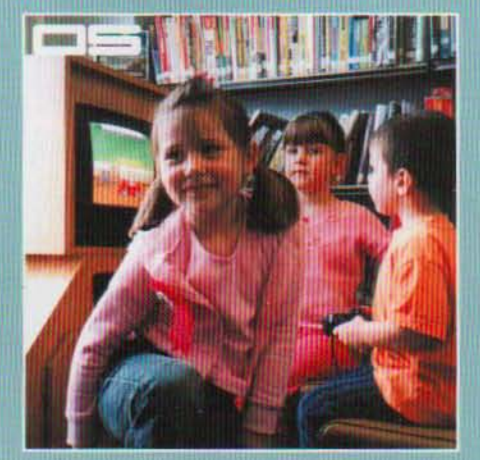
Meet Maxx Payne, now retired due to too many hours in the ring and that nasty Superglue accident



The Salt Lake Tribune



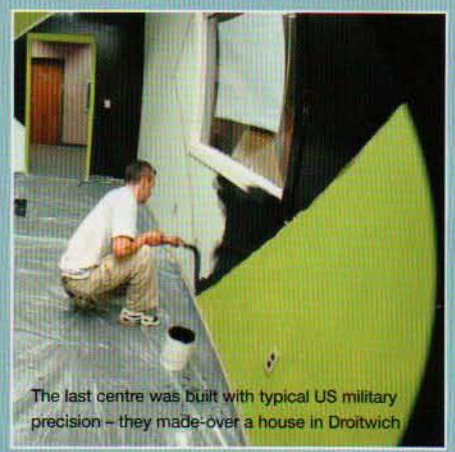
And Max Payne's special move? Falling over very slowly while wearing a rictus grin. Case closed





Local councillor, Valdo Funning, prefers Voltaire over videogames. But does his soul still burn?





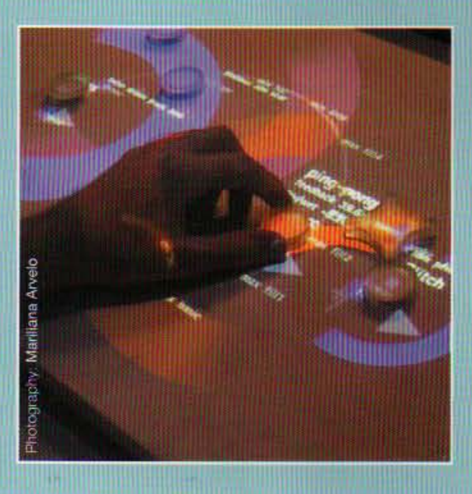
The last centre was built with typical US military precision – they made-over a house in Droitwich



Come on, be honest, if you saw this kind of thing on 'Star Trek' you'd wee your pants in excitement, yes?



Audiopad uses antenna technology to make noises, and if you're really lucky it will pick up Heart FM



Photography: Marilliana Arvelo



The No Media Kings website, where crazy kids can go to buy the third issue of Novel Amusements





If Edge went to Vice City it would visit the ladies at the Malibu Club. It would also wear better pants

06 Up down up down shoot shoot…

Europe: Not content with living *Ace Combat 4* for real, the US air force recently spent $200,000 on building 17 online, multiplayer Xbox gaming centres at 14 bases across Europe. But don't worry cybercitizens – the US isn't bringing its expansionist policies to Blood Gulch. It's just providing some welcome R&R for airmen stationed far from home. Each location will receive between $7,000 and $20,000 to fit out a room for online gaming, meaning that, should *Operation Flashpoint* Xbox ever actually arrive, the pilot in your Live squad could be better qualified than you imagine.

07 Edge writes the songs

US: Edge often considers forming a pop group – think Morrissey meets S Club meets The Wedding Present meets Guns n' Roses meets Tim Follin – but it's never been able to find a suitable instrument. Harmonix is doing its best, but *Amplitude* is a little too restrictive, and the only thing certain about *Karaoke Revolution* is that it's going to cause intra-team duels and fights not seen since *Track & Field*. "What this world needs," **Edge** ponders, thought patterns flitting unhindered across the office, "is some kind of 21st century equivalent of the Theremin". Thank goodness, then, for MIT Media Lab graduate students James Patten and Ben Recht, who've designed something substantially cooler. Audiopad is built from a matrix of antenna elements, which track the positions of electronically tagged objects. Musicians move these elements across a tabletop, and software translates this movement into music, projecting representative visuals on top of the table. Watch the video at http://web.media.mit.edu/~jpatten/newaudiopad.htm – **Edge**'s first single, 'Miyamoto Touch', is out in December.

08 Holiday '03

US: Why not take a short, relaxing break in *GTA: Vice City*? Alternatively, download Jim Munroe's 'My Trip to Liberty City', which tracks a Canadian tourist doing exactly that. The narrator talks over ten minutes of in-game footage like it's the thirdperson camcorder equivalent of holiday snaps, gently explaining why syndicate thuggery isn't really his sort of thing, and he'd much rather go for a pleasant wander in the woods. The piece can be viewed online at www.nomediakings.org, but **Edge** recommends you purchase the third issue of 'Novel Amusments' from the site.

Continue

Edge
Ten years old! Why, it seems like only yesterday, etc
Pirates
Arr!
Repeating things back in an overly sarcastic voice
Repeating things back in an overly sarcastic voice?!

Quit

The number 10
We're sick of it now. When's the next milestone?
Fighting over page counts
Coming soon: an **Edge** that fits in your handbag
Limited holiday time
So many games, so little time



MEDIA

09 On Game Design

Even with 621 pages at your disposal, game design is a difficult subject to encapsulate in book. Involving both technical and creative aspects, it's not the type of endeavour that can be caged within a grid of checklists and procedure, nor unlocked by examples of what others have done in the past. Clearly this is something Rollings and Adams, both experienced freelance designers, are aware of, as they attempt to square the circle by breaking down the structure of the book into two main sections.

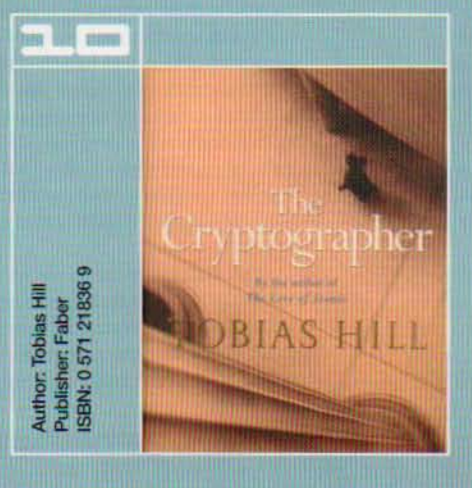
Part I investigates game design from a step-by-step chronological angle; starting with a concept and working through issues such as setting, narrative, characterisation, user experience and gameplay. Part II attacks laterally, detailing the differences of nine game genres. Between the two approaches, there's plenty of advice available. Ranging from snippets of classic game design lore such as Sid Meier's view that gameplay is a series of interesting choices, to actual in-game examples of both good and bad choices, On Game Design manages to maintain the balance between too much detail and not enough information. It should certainly prove to be a popular text for the multitude of university game design courses which are springing up around the world. For that reason however, some game designers might find it a bit lightweight on practical methods for improvement, in which case Andrew Rollings' (together with Dave Morris) book in the the same series on Game Architecture and Design is a must.

10 The Cryptographer

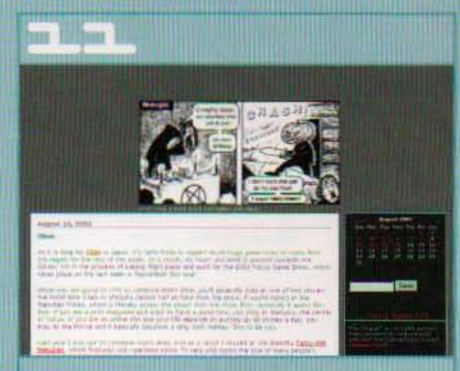
Considering the volatile state of the world's currency markets, and particularly the resurgence of the gold bugs, Tobias Hill's The Cryptographer seems prescient in the extreme. Set 15 years in the future, when physical money has all but been replaced by Soft Gold, a virtual standard protected by an ever-mutating viral encryption, it follows the task of revenue inspector Anna Moore as she delves into the financial affairs of Soft Gold's creator John Law. The Cryptographer of the title, Law is more than just a Rockefeller or Gates of his time. Aloof, secretive, reclusive, feared even, he seems to have it all. Slowly the very wheels of commerce end up depending on his invention; on code which is marketed as being perfect. Strange then that slight irregularities start to appear in the accounts of the world's first quadrillionaire. Caught between her fascination at entering Law's inner circle and her duty as an inspector, Moore soon find herself a catalyst for wider change.

Dense, in places seemingly obtuse but always meticulously written, this is a book in which a lot happens, albeit with little ceremony. The wider consequences of the plot never overwhelms the characters, but more than just that, like the work of the cryptographer himself, nothing is ever really in doubt – the conclusion is hardwired into the book's initial conditions. Codes will be broken, life will change. And perhaps that is Hill's greatest skill. In taking on society's mores of safety, both personal and financial, he strips away the surface and gives us a deeper view of ourselves.





11



Site: **Video Fenky**
URL: **www.video-fenky.com**

11 Website of the month

'Gamepro' writer Fennec Fox's blog is quiet and unassuming. There is no mission statement; no hyperbolic taglines; no boastful straps promising the first news or the best reviews or the most interesting features. This pleasant lack of soundbites forces **Edge** to write its own description of Video Fenky. It is updated daily, containing videogame news that is predominantly sourced from Japan. It also contains thorough and efficient translations of interviews from Japanese magazines. It's delicate and humorously written, but rarely judgemental. It's the sort of site other sites check in the morning before compiling their 'exclusive' rewrites for the afternoon. Bookmark today, and foil them tomorrow.

12 Advertainment

Japan: Edge is ten. But *Space Invaders* is 25…



Voiceover: "Nineteen seventy-eight…"



"…because of the success of this game…"



"…there has been a dramatic lack of ¥100 coins…"



"…and the Bank of Japan has had to act…"



"…and manufacture more of these coins."



"The very same *Space Invaders* is back for only 15 of these ¥100 coins and with twice the content!"



(Message: "Brothers… let's play videogames.")

If you were to freeze frame this moment, rotate and zoom in, the GameCube pad would be caught in midair, perfectly illuminated between the fourth and fifth bars of hot, dry sunlight that stream through RedEye's blinds. You could see the bars of light because of the dust, which shifts listlessly around the room. In freeze frame, the dust would be static too. The windows behind the blinds are open, but if everything was paused you could not hear the traffic below, or the two Turkish men arguing on the sidewalk. There would be no breeze; but there is no breeze anyway. Perhaps that is why the temperature is rising.

Or perhaps it's because of something else. Let the frames start to slip by again and the pad accelerates and starts to drift through the air, slowly and gracefully at first, but picking up urgency as time approaches normal rate. And by the time the dust starts to wander again, and the noise from the road below groans back into life, the pad is hurtling, violently. It is not gently arcing to some pile of peripherals. It has been thrown in anger in a random direction away from the player. And perhaps *that* is why the temperature is rising.



REDEYE

A sideways look at the videogame industry

RedEye likes his gaming rough but fair

Ten years ago, in its very first issue, **Edge** reviewed a graffiti-chic 2D platformer by HudsonSoft called *Yo! Joe*. "It's half-a-dozen levels of pretty standard jump-around-and-hack-up-baddies fare," wrote a nubile young **Edge**. "But the quality of execution is just breathtaking. From the dazzlingly bright graphics to the fiendishly-designed maps to the clever use of power-ups, it's all done absolutely superbly, in a way that makes you want to play the game again and again." It scored a whopping 8/10, despite **Edge**'s misgivings about the game's difficulty level. "It's still not the hardest game you'll ever play," the self-styled hardcore magazine wrote, "And with that in mind the infinite continues it allows you start to look like slightly less of a good idea." Everyone likes a challenge, don't they?

And, almost ten years later, **Edge** reviewed a graffiti-chic 2D platformer by Capcom called *Viewtiful Joe*. It's just over half-a-dozen levels of pretty standard jump-around-and-hack-up-baddies fare, but the quality of execution is just breathtaking. From the dazzlingly bright graphics to the fiendishly designed maps to the clever use of power-ups, it's all done absolutely superbly, in a way that makes you want to play the game again and again. Last issue it scored a whopping 8/10, despite **Edge**'s misgivings about the game's difficulty level. "Joyous emotions eventually give way to despair and frustration as it becomes necessary to get to grips with the game's idiosyncratic logic, and deal with the astronomical difficulty level of later stages," an older, smarter **Edge** despaired.

A decade of progress. How far we've come.

But, yes, *Viewtiful Joe* is exceptionally difficult. RedEye can't recall a game that's humiliated him as much, embarrassed him as quickly. RedEye can't recall a game that's had him stuck on the first level for so long; a game that has had him considering toning down the difficulty to Kids, and receiving further punishment to the psyche on learning that there are actually two difficulty levels above and beyond the one that he's failing on right now.

"Build a game that is satisfying, one that can crack a joypad and still have you coming back for more, and players will play, no matter how hard it is"

If we pan from the joypad – which is nearing the open window, by the way, and it's unlikely the cotton blinds will stop it – to the TV we see Joe. He is caught in momentary freeze frame, this time by the game's design. His back is arched. The screen is white. He has just lost his last life to an unforgiving robotic helicopter. "Cut, cut, cut," screams the in-game director, but his drawl is drowned out by ruder staccato syllables from RedEye's mouth.

It's a frustrating game. RedEye doesn't throw this kind of hissy fit often, but that gut-wrenching heart-pounding moment when failure is inevitable but you still pray for salvation; that seems to hit harder here than it has for a while. Perhaps it's because *Viewtiful Joe* plays so rough but so fair. Each of the helicopter boss's attacks are based on it firing a number of independent objects. These objects – bullets, missiles, soldiers – follow simple AI routines, then intermingle and interact and produce a whole host of ways for Joe to die and pads to be thrown. But the rules are always constant – you know exactly what kills you. You just don't know when it's going to come.

But it always brings you back for more. *Viewtiful Joe*'s soulmate is *Halo* on Legendary: ridiculously hard at first, and built on Lego-brick AI that produces the illusion of something more entertaining. This is why, a split-second after the pad has left RedEye's hands, the purple mist leaves and he brings his hands to his head, willing the spinning piece of purple plastic away from the window. The cable connecting the pad to the Cube pulls tight, and though it pops out of its socket, the resistance is enough to jerk the missile's path downwards and into the plaster wall with a thud. Thank God the WaveBird's out of batteries.

So, quickly, before we run out of space, how far have we come in the last ten years? Mach-speed: we have come a million miles on polygon roads, met a dozen new consoles, new media, new genres, new ways of playing. But one basic rule of play has remained solid: regardless of levels or completion time or happiness in predefined segments, build a game that is satisfying in each freeze-framed instant – one that can crack a joypad, and still have you coming back for more – and players will play, no matter how hard or easy it is.

Ten years down the line, it will be the same. More polygons, more people, more ways of enjoying our hobby than ever; and one journal treating them in the way they deserve to be treated. Happy birthday to **Edge**. RedEye hopes that there'll be many more.

RedEye is a veteran videogame journalist. His views do not necessarily coincide with **Edge**'s

Over the decade that **Edge** has been casting its gimlet eye on the videogame industry, our electronic pastime has been the subject of countless ignorant assaults. Perhaps the most pernicious of the accusations regularly levelled at games is that they are not educational. Well, on the contrary, I feel that I have learned a lot from videogames over the years: useful knowledge that can be of benefit to us in our daily lives. So in homage to ten years of videogame criticism, I should like this month to celebrate what games have taught me.

1. Motoring advice

Get out of a car when it is about to explode. Until flames are actually pouring from underneath the bonnet however, it is perfectly roadworthy.

The best way to get round a tight corner while racing touring cars is by bouncing off other cars.



TRIGGER HAPPY

Steven Poole

Hints and tips for Real Life

No matter how dangerously you drive, innocent pedestrians on the sidewalk will usually manage to jump out of the way in time.

Everything is a possible ramp.

A determined person can hijack a tank.

2. Finding your way

People who lock doors always leave keys nearby for you to find. Just keep looking.

Evil overlords who build dizzyingly complex dungeons always leave a handy map locked in a chest, the key to which, of course, is always left nearby for you to find.

If ever you are lost, a large glowing white arrow will appear on the ground and guide you to an appropriate destination.

If you are afraid of being seen, simply open all doors very slowly. It then becomes impossible for anyone to notice you. Guards never stand behind doors, for reasons unknown. This infallible method of opening doors slowly can be used to impress your friends at hide-and-seek parties.

3. Know your enemy

The dangers of handguns are hysterically overrated by mainstream society. Shooting a man with a gun is just likely to annoy him a little bit; you have to shoot him many times to cause any serious injury. On the other hand, it is possible to kill someone instantly by shooting them seven times in the ankle.

Incorporeal monsters can be beaten by brandishing a stick. Demons from hell can be dispatched with bullets. A sword can pass through the torso of a man, for instance an irritating middle-manager, with no apparent ill effect. Buy a Shaolin broadsword from any good martial-arts supplier and try this yourself: you'll be amazed.

If you break a man's arm with a jointlock, he'll grimace, and then continue to fight as if nothing has happened. The only way to disable someone in unarmed combat is to rip out their spine.

If you meet a monster, don't worry. No matter how enormous and frightening a monster may be, it will always have a targetable weak spot. Some choose to leave this weak spot as the only part of their body not covered in impenetrable armour; others expose their weak spot in a 'pattern' that is as predictable as clockwork. Always count on the stupidity of your foe and you will be fine.

Small-arms fire is underrated. With sufficient ammunition, you can kill anything with a pistol, from a tyrannosaurus rex to a dragon.

Bipedal-humanoid is the most efficient shape for a giant robot.

"Chocolate is excellent medicine for a flesh wound. If you are more seriously injured you will need a roll of bandages and a can of antiseptic"

4. Health and safety

Chocolate is excellent medicine for a flesh wound. If you are more seriously injured, for instance if you have been shot five times, you will need a roll of bandages and a can of spray-on antiseptic.

Some high falls will kill you, but you can fall any distance into water with no ill effects. You can test this by jumping off the Forth Bridge.

It can be dangerous to play with pineapples. All other fruit is good for you.

You should try to eat a whole roast turkey every day or so, but fluids are unnecessary: a person can go days or weeks without water.

5. Career counselling

US Marines, SWAT officers, special-forces commandos and police officers enjoy unlimited killing rights in the name of law enforcement. Incurable psychopaths are welcomed with open arms by these institutions.

If you choose a life of crime, which is certainly a viable career path, you can be sure that your local law-enforcement agencies will be staffed by thoroughly incompetent kamikaze lunatics.

All scientists are cowards. At the first sign of trouble, scientists will immediately go to cower in a corner with their hands above their heads. They are also traitorous. Do not become a scientist. Unless your name is Gordon, in which case it might be okay.

6. Ethics and society

Remember to smash any and all priceless urns, vases, bowls and so on that you happen across. Objects of value are often left inside such receptacles, and no one would dream of objecting to your ebullient destruction of pottery. The British Museum is a good place to start.

Drugs are bad, mmmkay?

There's nothing wrong with burglary: if you see anything that might be of use in someone else's house, just grab it. They won't mind.

The purpose of conversation is always and only to elicit clues. Once an interlocutor has told you what you need to know, feel free to beat him.

Friendship between females is based on nothing more than a clinically calculated relationship of reciprocal gift-giving. Any woman will melt if a stranger walks up to her in a bar and gives her a bikini.

These priceless tips represent only a small selection from the vast store of practical knowledge I have gleaned from videogames. After carefule consideration, you too may find that applying such lessons to your daily life can lead to a far more entertaining and satisfying existence.

Steven Poole is the author of 'Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames' (Fourth Estate). Email: steven_poole@mac.com

A few days ago, I watched a short report on Nihon Television. During the report, someone – I don't recall their name, I'm sorry – said, "Japanese workers have to be given an easier time of it. This is particularly important when it comes to salary, and also the amount of vacation time." Broadly, that encapsulates what the debate was about. The idea was that this reason could explain the current sluggish state of the Japanese economy.

Let me paraphrase again: "The Japanese economy is in serious trouble. This comes from a vicious circle, born from the pressure on the Japanese workforce. Giving people an easier time in everyday life would allow them to restart and enrich their minds. Society must be easier upon them, must allow more comfort to more people in their chosen place of work, a better environment and better conditions."

This is an argument I can understand, or at least part of it. For example, I think it's a bad time to try and start a new business, a desperate time, because of all these pessimistic sentiments about our economy. While the financial predictions of analysts are often darker than the reality, starting a new business at the moment is unlikely to give good results. But there are few points I can't accept, or even understand, mostly concerning the part about giving Japanese more comfort. Could this really be the reason for the current sluggish economy? Would introducing more time to relax really have any decisive impact on this issue?

In the past, people have always considered that there are three ways for Japan to speak to the world, to project itself worldwide. These three methods are technology, anime and videogames.

Technology is a culture model that originated in various countries across Europe, but was imported to Japan, where it was reshaped to adapt to our culture, giving it a new face, and then exported back across the world.

Anime, or animation, was also born outside, in the US, thanks mainly to Walt Disney. And again, it came to Japan where it experienced a complete transformation, and became successful worldwide. Even if the creations or 'products' that Japan produces from these two methods are selling in huge numbers worldwide, they're not originally from our culture, merely eastern spins on western creations.

However, for the third and last means, videogames, we can truly claim that Japan is the birthplace for the medium and still famously praised for them, all around the world. You don't agree? Surely the reason is not too difficult to understand. Videogames came from, and have been developed in Kyoto, meaning from Nintendo... oh, I see... you really do disagree.

Of course, I know that the very first videogames were originally developed in the US – everyone knows that, and I'm not trying to pretend that they weren't. But, back then, even the best videogames were just simple lights flicking on and off, binary, simplistic interaction. Being reasonable, it's clear that it was Nintendo that began to turn this foetal form into a separate culture of home entertainment.

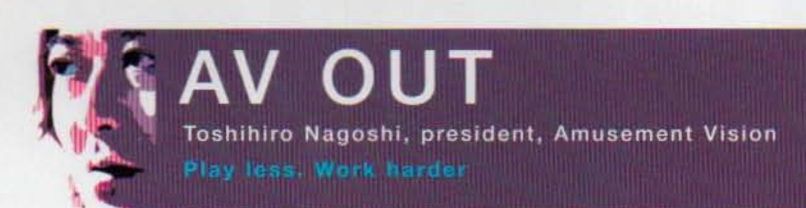
But the reason Japan has led the videogame industry for so long can't be found in simple branding. That 'Made in Japan' has carried such significant weight for so long on the strength of location alone is far too basic an idea. The real reason is somewhat deeper. The Japanese people love very polished and meticulous things. It is a national characteristic. There is a common idea in Japan that 'craftsmen' deliver the best quality products, and there is some pride in being regarded as a craftsman.

And there are geographical reasons, too. There are no natural resources in Japan, at least nothing like oil, capable of producing a large revenue for the country. I believe that Japan's natural resources are to be found in its people; through their abilities, and their natural tendency to work at a task with a high degree of dedication. Since the vast majority of its citizens speak only one language, a language used by very few worldwide, there is some isolation. And even with almost no natural resources, Japan, this small, insular, introspective group of islands became a major economy on this planet.

At least it is right now. The worry is that the economy is collapsing, and our position as a worldwide power may be only temporary. Perhaps it is. Who knows? But anyway, I believe our current standing is possible because of this national characteristic of dedication, of application. And that's why I have such great difficulty in listening to the words of the television reporter. He believes we should work less hard; I believe that's what makes us great. If we continue to work as hard as we do, eventually we will recover from this slump, and that in turn will bring greater games; greater games that we have produced based on both our resources, experience, this strong and fine work ethic we have in us. This is why we'll continue to be famous for producing the best videogames. Hey, my economic policy may change the current delicate financial situation of Japan's languishing videogame business, and ultimately play its part in Japan's economic recovery in the world! Why not?

Then again, more time off would help me right now! But to get time off, I need to work harder. Hmm. I suppose this is that vicious circle, isn't it? Anyway, I'll be around, working hard. As usual. See you!





AV OUT

Toshihiro Nagoshi, president, Amusement Vision

Play less. Work harder

"Japan's natural resources are to be found in its people; their abilities, and their natural tendency to work at a task with a high degree of dedication"

Toshihiro Nagoshi is general manager of Sega's newly-formed Creative Center division

Tin – that's what they give as a gift for a tenth anniversary, which underscores just how insignificant a time span a decade actually is. Admittedly you could give some achingly worthy charity a 'tin' of money, or a homeless shanty town dweller a sheet of 'tin' for his roof, both of which would significantly increase the perceived value of the tin. But none of that precludes the basic fact that, in le scheme du grande, ten years is a flob-fleck on the peeling lips of history. At least... that's what the philosophers and physicists would tell you.

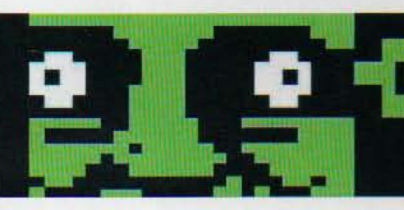
"Oh, we're all just scattered blips of chance in the cosmic ballet," they'd say. "Random, sentient moments, of negligible significance to the multiverse. None of this which we perceive as our life means a fat fudgey finger, blah-de-blah, etc." But you just try telling that to a laid-off 3DO, or Atari, or Commodore employee. You try explaining it to the roleplaying game companies or toy firms who've been put out to be part of the industry. And an equally exciting – if expensive – time to be a gaming punter.

You play something like *EyeToy*, or *Wario Ware Inc*, and they're arguably the most pure, and accessible gaming experiences since *Tetris*; games everyone can play without needing a manual. It's as if the industry needed to lose its way, and grope around in the dark for ten years, before being able to remember what it was that made gaming great in the first place (for the purposes of this argument let us side-step Nintendo's '90s output – steadfast purveyor of unadulterated gameplay, struggling to make its classicists' mantra audible above the din).

But now it all seems to be settling down. Call me over-optimistic, but Sony and Microsoft both seem to have long-term, cohesive plans for the future of their gaming brands (again, let's push Nintendo, and its apparently outmoded business model, to one side... doubtless its executives still come to work in

Admittedly, I could be spiting my own column here; **Edge** ran one such feature earlier this year, speculating that gaming has become boring. But at least **Edge** tempers such pessimism with a genuine love of gaming. It's other publications, online and off, where you can see the bitterness seeping between every word. It's easy to see why it's happening; frankly, game journalism needs fresh blood. There are too many 30-something writers around, who really should move onto something new. A career or industry where they don't feel so jaded, don't feel as if they've seen it all.

That said, it's inevitable that they'd get that way. Who wouldn't start to take games for granted when you've spent over ten years getting them for free? Who wouldn't lose their enthusiasm when they've played their 45th ice hockey game, or struggled to find something new and insightful to say about yet another generic action heroine?



BIFFOVISION

Page 28, press hold, and reveal. 'Digitiser's founder speaks out

Careers advice, Mr Biffo style

of business, or seen their profits farted into the ether since 1993. Or the arcade managers who've shot themselves because they've gone bust. Or the Japanese kids that, it is claimed, suffered fits because of the Pokémon cartoon. All thanks to the blossoming of videogames as cultural phenomena.

It seems almost stupid to stress that gaming moves at a snapneck pace, but sitting here looking back over the last ten years it's almost frightening to see quite how tumultuous they've been. In many respects, the 1980s were a calmer time for gaming. The years since 1993 have seen countless companies rise then go out of business, new formats released every other week, the introduction of new genres, and technology, and new and terrifying benchmarks set in gameplay and graphical loveliness. And with all that we've seen, the rise of the whingers, those who've had their breath snatched away by the sheer force of the changes, and find themselves somewhat overwhelmed and dizzy now that their lungs have re-filled with God's rich oxygen.

See, from a certain point of view, the last decade has been a transitional period. The rise of 3D gaming, the internet, CD-ROMs, more affordable, more powerful processors, and all that guff, left the industry playing a constant game of catch-up. As much as we all may have complained at the time, the truth is that state of flux made it an exciting time

their legwarmers and 'Frankie says...' t-shirts). And while we should all be happy, most of us are not. There's a culture of cynicism brewing, and it leaves a nasty taste in my mouth.

Fact: broadly speaking, gaming has never been so great. Another fact: gamers have more choice than ever. One last fact: yes, there are loads of identikit games out there, but there always will be.

So why the cynics? The double-jointed finger of blame can be jabbed in two directions at once; the gaming press and the internet. It's a given that the latter will always breed a culture of wry contempt; such is the nature of man when hidden behind an electronic wall. Unfortunately, and I fully accept my share of the blame in all this, game journalists have forgotten how to enjoy themselves. You overhear the conversations at the press launches and jollies; it's just incessant moaning. About their jobs. About the games they have to play. About how so-and-so at Whizzo PR is a fat idiot, and doesn't know what he's doing. It wouldn't be so bad if they confined their opinions among their peers, but they seem determined to force them upon their readers (and again, I'm well aware that I'm at risk of becoming Daddy Hypocrite).

I've been there; the toughest thing I ever had to do was write a 6,000-word review on *MotoGP2*. Six thousand words on a motorbike game?! I couldn't get beyond the fact that all the reader needed to know was that, a) it was a game in which you raced bikes and, b) it was not bad, but not very exciting.

"Frankly, game journalism needs fresh blood. There are too many 30-something writers around, who really should move on to something new"

What I should've realised is that, to fresher eyes, *MotoGP* was brand new. Somebody out there had never played a motorbike game, and did want to hear about the replays, and the tuning screens. And it was them I should've been writing for – and as.

I got out before it was too late. Before the cynicism consumed me, and I became unable to write a review without slating some other game, or company, or individual. Consequently, having gone cold turkey for a couple of months, I've begun to enjoy games again. Without risking being glassed by some balding, pot-bellied wordsmith at the next ECTS, I'd suggest a few of my peers took a similar long, hard look at their career curve, lest they find themselves venting the same recycled bile in another ten years. Games? They're for the kids really.

Mr Biffo is a semi-retired videogame journalist. His views do not necessarily coincide with ***Edge**'s*

Edge's most wanted

Pokemon Pinball Ruby/Sapphire
(Game Boy Advance) Nintendo

From Macadam Bumper to Revenge of the Gator, **Edge** has always loved a bit of finger-flipping fun. If it can better the last version, then this will be terrific.



Killzone
(PlayStation2) SCEE

A dark, brooding atmosphere and some of the best visuals yet seen on PS2. If the framerate improves then Killzone could be the best shooter on the system.



Metal Arms: Glitch in the System
(GC, Xbox, PS2) Vivendi Universal

Rabbits and **Edge** go back a long, long way and Swingin' Ape Studios' comedic offering is currently looking like it will tick all the right boxes come release.



Broken Sword III: The Sleeping Dragon
(PC, Xbox, PS2, GC) THQ

And not just because Charles Cecil is the nicest man in the videogame business. The BS series has never disappointed and BSIII looks unlikely to change this.



You've come a long way baby

It's time to forget about those damned statistics

The beautifully drawn buildings and objects in the game take up over 2 meg of hard disk space, and the speed at which the game engine shifts all this around onscreen is simply amazing. Still, all this impressive detail means that this is probably a game that's more suited to 486 or 68040 specced machines." That's from **Edge**'s review of *SimCity 2000* in **E**7. It's not the kind of comment that you'd expect to find in the magazine's pages these days. Which, in a way, shows how far the videogame industry has progressed in the past ten years. Today, reviewers are less about how a game runs, and more preoccupied with how a game *plays*. Technical statistics simply aren't as important to gamers as they once were.

This sort of development isn't unique to the videogame industry. In fact, there's an interesting parallel with the visual arts in 15th century Italy. In general, over the course of that century, a subtle change took place in the nature of the contracts drawn up between patron and artist. At the start of the century, patrons would stipulate the quality of the materials to be used – stating that expensive ultramarine ought to be used instead of cheaper substitutes such as German blue, for example. But by the end of the century, these contracts attached greater importance to the skill of the artist, insisting that the master of the workshop paint a certain proportion of the image instead.

Similarly, in the early days of the CD-ROM, it was viewed with interest because of its technical capabilities: at last developers could use full motion video in games like *Rebel Assault*. Eventually though, it became clear that the CD-ROM was just another, albeit novel, delivery mechanism. What was interesting about it was not the amount of storage space, but the way that storage space was used to create new types of videogame.

After ten years, it's become clear that consoles themselves are simply one way of delivering content. The number of polygons that they can push is less interesting than the way those polygons are pushed. That's why games like *O.TO.GI* and its sequel (see p32) are of interest. These aren't games that can be fairly scrutinised by reducing them to the statistics that are so beloved of marketing departments. And that's why similar games will be of interest to **Edge** for the next ten years.














O.TO.GI. 2

From Software reveals some early glimpses of its follow-up to the Xbox's most beautiful fighting fantasy







Appropriately enough for a game so beautiful, the most immediately noticeable alterations are aesthetic, with the game's demon-killer able to make use of some devastating magic tricks

Sequels to successes have a hackneyed tight-rope to tread: how to preserve the virtue of the old without letting it stagnate. And when the strength of the original is something as nebulous as 'atmosphere', as was the case with the first *O.TO.GI*, then the challenge is unusually delicate.

The mechanics of the first game are likely to be preserved almost intact. The combo system of the original functioned with perfect balance – sustaining extended aerial combat and funding the shopping trips that enabled you to upgrade and repair your weapons. **Edge** sees no need for it to be altered.

What main changes there are seem to be cosmetic. The slender frame of Raiko the demon-killer gives way to a figure even more fragile, but if anything the swirling beauty of the destruction he unleashes is even more furious. Magic effects shimmer with equal measures of delicacy and devastation.

Once again the game is grounded in the elemental nature of each level, as stone, eart[h] and wood are all equally demolishable. It's a[n] effect which is compounded by the dramatic weather effects which lash and swirl around the action. The wildness of the exterior locations contrasts even more strongly with the luxuriously burnished glow in the interior settings. The level of detail in the furnishings is extraordinary. **Edge** never thought of itself as a vandal, but it can't wait to reduce acres of lacquer and marquetry

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **From Software**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **TBC**









"Edge never thought of itself as a vandal, but it can't wait to reduce acres of lacquer and marquetry and inlaid ivory to chunks"

and inlaid ivory to so many rubbled chunks.

Other recurring locations include the ships which were the setting the eerie protection missions of the first game. The sequel sees them transported to a luminous mist which reinforces the sense of other-wordly isolation which the original conveyed so powerfully.

Often Prescreens are an exercise in deferred gratification. The start of a long hopeful haul, which will end months later either in disillusionment or delight – or, on occasion, in bewilderment as games vanish or morph into something less palatable. But for once, anyone tempted by these screens can satisfy their craving almost instantly, since the PAL release of the original is scheduled for September.

Indeed, **Edge** concluded its review of that first game with a downbeat assessment of the likelihood of the game making a European appearance. It's delighted to have been proved wrong, and hopes that sales prove encouraging enough to secure PAL plans for its spectacular sequel.



Sega's plans to bring the original *O.TO.GI* to European audiences has restored Edge's faith in humanity. Hopefully the same can be expected for the sequel, which is looking just as good

SWAT: Global Strike Team

An FPS in which the player takes the role of an elite police officer in a dystopian future, and resists the urge to shoot captured criminals in the back of the head...

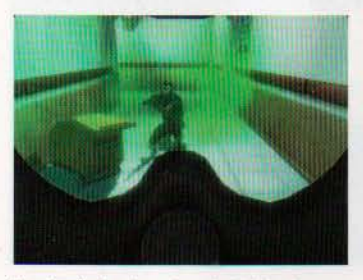


The blend of recognisable cityscapes and futuristic detail makes for atmospheric and believable environments. Combined with the complexity of the lighting effects, the result is solid and almost tangible



SWAT hasn't had the simplest genesis. A console interpretation of the successful PC strategy FPS, it began development as an Xbox-only title, but instructions from on high have seen it turn into a PS2 release too. Its was an awkward transition to make, but the conversion has seen most of the game's graphical flourishes survive the transition to the less powerful system. Importantly, these include *SWAT*'s impressive dynamic lighting effects. Rotating ceiling fans cast atmospheric moving shadows, while moving between areas with starkly different lighting brings an effect

"Tottenham Court Road is hideous and instantly recognisable. And the satisfaction of shooting would-be commuters in hooded tops..."



The detailed work put into the lighting is enhanced by mask and smoke effects

simulating your character's pupils adjusting to the light. Artificial lights can also be eliminated by the player, providing cover for stealthy assaults, but this is no *Splinter Cell*.

Indeed, players approaching the game like they would its pensive, PC-only older brother, are likely to find themselves bewildered by the pace. There's no opportunity for strategic route planning through the levels – indeed, the locations are wholly linear, albeit well disguised – and directing your two team-mates is mostly limited to simple 'unlock this' or 'open that' commands, their combat AI pleasantly similar to *Halo*'s cooperative model. While those who wish to take a cautious route through each level will make it through unharmed, the score-based competition (disappointingly, the only online aspect the game will afford) depends on players clearing the structures in record time with maximum efficiency.

What of the environments? **Edge** had the opportunity to witness the developers adventuring through several, including a robbery at a large, very well air-conditioned bank, and an assault on what appeared to be the plush headquarters of some middle-eastern terrorist organisation. **Edge**'s favourite, though, was the London Underground, in which your brave team take on a group of Cockney terrorists in a station 'loosely based' on Tottenham Court Road. It appears that time hasn't improved London's public transport system one bit; it's quite hideous, and instantly recognisable. And the satisfaction of shooting would-be commuters in hooded tops...

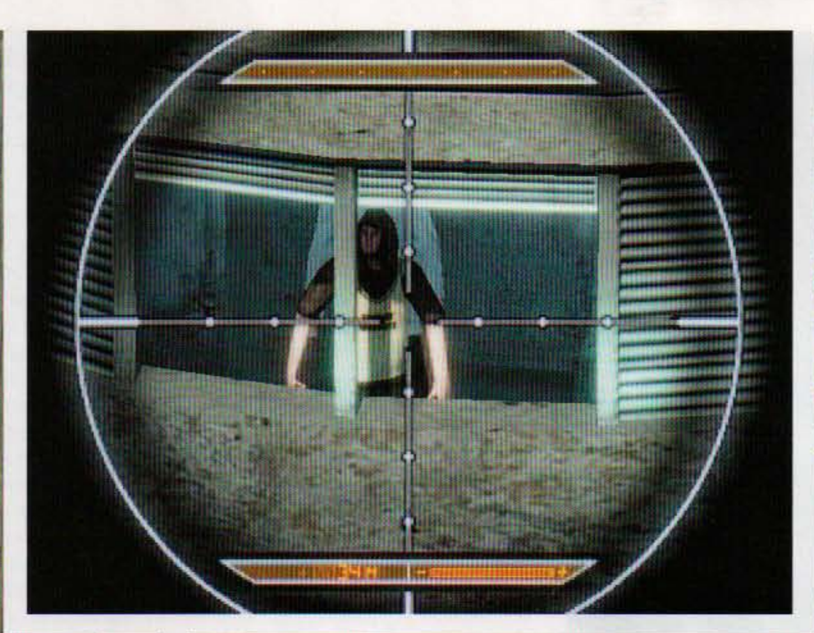
But you don't have to shoot them. Each enemy has a justice meter which appears as a radial bar around the crosshairs when they're targeted. The bar represents how resistant they are to being arrested. Mashing the button – or shouting (see Talk time) – causes it to fill, and when it's full the target w[ill] drop to their knees. Different targets have different levels of bravery, and they're influenced by external factors too, like how many of their immediate team are still breathing. Using a stealthier approach can help your arrest rate, too: approach a person from behind, point the gun at their backs, tel[l] them to surrender and they will.

Once a target's dropped the player has a certain amount of time to reach them and cu[ff] them, a case of targeting them at close rang[e] and pressing a single button. But it must be

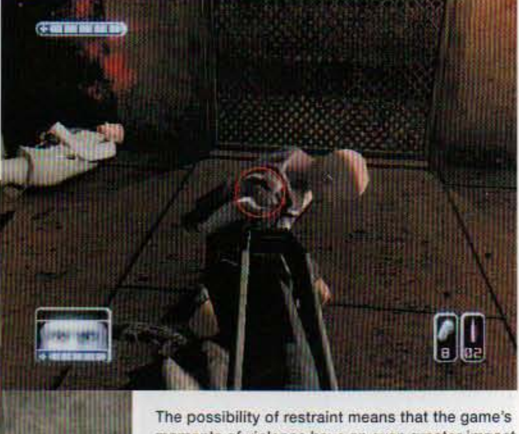


Format: **PS2, Xbox**
Publisher: **Vivendi Universal**
Developer: **Argonaut Games**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **Q4**

Previously in **E**125







The possibility of restraint means that the game's moments of violence have an even greater impact

done, because otherwise they'll rise and start fighting back again. Of course, it might prove easier to just shoot them when they've surrendered – but doing so brings up a cry of, "Unauthorised Force!" and drops your rating for the game. Medals can be won for exceptionally non-fatal performances, or for meeting other secondary mission goals.

Each level contains at least one key target, too, who must be arrested for the player to receive upgrade points at the end of the mission. These points can be spent on improving weapons, which brings a tiny touch of *Deus Ex* to a game otherwise best described as an arcade-oriented *SOCOM*. Argonaut has managed to differentiate this enough from the slew of firstperson shooters that find a release each and every month. Providing Vivendi can get *SWAT*'s chief selling points across to the firstperson public, there's little reason to suppose it won't be a major release come Christmas.





Although some of *SWAT*'s visuals are reminiscent of the kind of cursory stealth-by-numbers that plague many current gun games, differing objectives fully integrate a more cautious approach into the game

Talk time

SWAT is compatible with _SOCOM_'s bundled headset, and also with the Xbox Live equivalent. This means that you can issue simple commands to your team-mates via a smart voice recognition system; order them to break down a door and they will, allowing you to concentrate on the fine art of shooting people in the face. Or, if you're more of a responsible law-lovin' cop, you can use the voice comms to arrest digital felons, by shouting "Police! Police!" until their resistance falls to your stern commands.

Chrome

Format: PC
Publisher: Gathering (Take 2 Interactive)
Developer: Techland
Origin: Poland
Release: September 19

Planet-hopping, double-crossing and smart-talking, this Polish mercenary FPS might be the nearest thing the genre ever gets to Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy



"Sure, you can jump, play with your knife and shoot everybody. Aren't you special." So sneers Carrie at the brawn-addled hero of *Chrome*, the gorgeously named Bolt Logan. But by putting these words in her mouth, Techland has thrown down a gauntlet to FPSs in general, and its own in particular.

The core of *Chrome* is solid rather than special. The game is set across a system of remote and lawless moons, where shady mining corporations compete for scare deposits of Chrome, an essential component in nano-technology. Conceived as a tactical FPS, the game does everything it can to encourage precise and methodical play. Enemy fire is lethal: if caught between two or more lines of fire it can be almost impossible to escape death – a predicament made even tougher by Healtex packs which replenish health gradually rather than all at once.

Enemy AI, however, is satisfyingly normal. Troops find it as hard as you do to determine the source of fire when under attack, but once they have identified your position, they then split and circle behind you. Nor are you only under threat from men. Many planets are home to varied wildlife – some placid, others galloping through the undergrowth to deliver fatal blows to your ankles.

Where the game hopes to rise above the rest is with the nano-implants which become available as the adventure progresses. More sophisticated than simply fitter, stronger, one gives the naked eye the power to zoom, another strengthens your arms enough to eliminate recoil and dramatically improve accuracy. Use comes at a price, however. The more implants you have active, the greater the load on your nano-circuits. Overload them and they blow, dimming your vision and zapping your health. Switch them off in time, and your circuitry cools. While their use needs to be limited, it's a frustrating system. The current burst of use is too short, the cooling period too long. Combined with the slow-release nature of the healing packs, too much time is spent hunched behind boulders, counting to 20 while your gauges refill.

Expect six multiplayer modes, ranging from classic deathmatch to more complex base capture-and-defend contests. In order to live up to its own challenge, Techland only needs to tweak the timings of the implant system, address difficulty levels and consider a friendlier autosave system.







Both your own and enemy bullets do realistic damage to the things around you, regardless of whether it's a tree or your lycra clad partner

Human Shield

The strict realism of the game extends to the rag doll physics of enemy corpses, which is astoundingly lifelike – rather a problem, of course, since strictly speaking it's supposed to be deadlike. Nevertheless there is plenty ghoulish fun to be had in reanimating your opponents with some well-placed bullets. Not that the game encourages such irresponsible behaviour – see-sawing a corpse off the railing of a sniping tower may be entertaining, but it looses you vital cover. In a game where enemy fire can prove so destructive no defence, however gory, can be ignored.



As well as taking advantage of enemy gun emplacement, *Chrome* also allows you to commandeer vehicles. Early signs are that these will satisfy in terms of both firepower and handling





Call of Duty

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **In-house (Infinity Ward)**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Q4**

Previously in **E**125

What's the sequel to Medal of Honor: Allied Assault going to be called? Well, that depends on who you ask...



It's clear what Activision's upper echelons regard the biggest selling point of *Call of Duty* to be, and, sure, it's a unique one. Twenty-two of the developers of Electronic Arts' chart-topping *Medal of Honor* series jumped ship to form Infinity Ward, something that's been plastered across the specialist media ever since Activision signed a long-term development contract with the virgin developer.

Still, you don't need to read a press release to recognise *Call of Duty*'s roots. A World War II firstperson shooter based on elaborate set-pieces that aim to reconstruct the real feel and horror of the conflict, the game has all the hallmarks of the EA franchise, right down to a terrifying, cinematic landing sequence. This time, however, the unfortunate conscripts are Russian – though *Call of Duty* has three campaigns, also inducting the player into US and British forces – and the action is much grittier. The introduction sees fleeing soldiers shot in the back by their own officers. "Not one step back," the commander reiterates.

But the key difference between *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor* is not the darker, outlook (most easily illustrated by the introduction of blood), but the emphasis that the war wasn't won by a hero, but by heroes.



The game uses the *Quake III* engine for the attention to detail evident in its 24 missions (some of which appear more linear than others)



During the Stalingrad level some 300 characters end up onscreen as a seemingly endless progression of Russian soldiers marching forward, attempting to storm the ruins where the enemy is freely firing from





Infinity Ward's ambition is to make players feel part of something larger; when you storm the beach as a Russian soldier, there are hundreds of other Russian soldiers fighting alongside you. *Call of Duty*'s set-pieces are among the most epic ever conceived in an FPS, and almost certainly use more virtual actors than any other game.

Despite this, the combat isn't all about a cast of hundreds. Some levels have you playing as part of a small squad, making your way through country towns and eliminating Nazi resistance as you find it. The AI works closely with you, providing covering fire and attacking the most obvious threats – but you never direct it, because you're not in charge. You're just a soldier, every bit as disposable as your comrades. Possibly more so; *Call of Duty* is a brutal game, and charging in like a Hollywood-fuelled lunatic will get you killed. Players must use both their squad and environmental cover to progress, so parallels with this and Activision's other WWII FPS, the reaction shooter *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, are few and far between. Instead, consider *Call of Duty* as *Operation Flashpoint* for people with short attention spans, or view – and this is presumably what Activision would like you to do – it as a follow-up to *Medal of Honor*, bigger, brighter, and bolder. It looks as promising as that suggests.







The level of atmosphere is generally pleasing although pre-scripted sequences – a particular *Medal of Honor* trait – appear to form part of the mould. Still, nothing wrong with that if done properly, of course

Xyanide

Format: Xbo
Publisher: Playlogic Internationa
Developer: In-hous
Origin: The Netherland
Release: Autum

Mutating spacecraft, pre-pubescent witches, body odour weaponry. Prepare for some decidedly offbeat Dutch hardcore











While visually competent, at the time of writing the game's engine draw distance does suffer during sections when the view shifts to behind your ship

When David Lynch signs up to develop an old-skool shooter with the help of an entire anime studio and a handful of location ideas drawn up by HR Giger and the art director of 'Metropolis', he will be too late. One-year-old Dutch publisher Playlogic has beaten him to it. *Xyanide* is an innovative amalgam of '80s 2D shooting and modern 3D effects. The player pilots a spacecraft through multiple waves of enemy ships and bosses, employing a primary laser and secondary missile launcher, which can be powered up by holding the button for more devastating effect.

But there's more to this project then mere nostalgia for *R-Type*. Employing the RenderWare 3D engine, *Xyanide* places its familiar space shooter action into a swirling 3D world, where the camera spirals around your ship, sometimes providing you with a sideways view, sometimes moving behind, or zooming overhead. All the while you steer around the screen with the left analogue, and aim the primary guns with the right, taking out enemy craft all around you, forcing some truly testing, circular tactics into play.

Then there's the transformation factor. Far from being a set construct your craft is capable of mutating along two different paths,











Progress into later stages of *Xyanide* sees a gradual transformation towards the game's interesting organic approach to level design

Mech and Organic – depending on which 'mutator' pick-ups you collect. Choose Mech and you get a focused powerful laser and a range of hi-tech electronic bombs and sonic blasts. Go Organic and you get a primary weapon that sends a spray of less-powerful bullets all over the screen, and weird, animalistic power-ups like pheromones, that convince enemy craft you're one of them.

Mutation forms a key theme of the game. The action takes place in a kind of fantasy realm created by a genocidal space witch, who – on her way to an interstellar execution – is hit by a meteor containing Xyanide, a chemical that renders thoughts into reality. She immediately imagines a destructive, morphing nightmare kingdom, that shifts and alters as you fly through it – the sole star fighter thought skilful enough to defeat her. Early levels have a Mech design, but later everything sways to Organic, with metallic corridors turning into glistening hives. This is a dizzying visual spectacle. It's *Ikaruga* territory given a dark European spin; an old-skool shooter, treated like a cult continental sci-fi film, packed with manga themes of body horror, transformation and the merging of machine and organic matter.

As with most 2D shooters, **Edge** is concerned this title will only find a market among those able to remember a time when instinctive, esoteric skills were required – before publishers decided all games had to be in 3D. Playlogic insists it has the mainstream player in mind though. And the clever visuals may well earn *Xyanide* the audience it appears to deserve.

Spider-Man 2

Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Treyarch**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Summer 2004**

With great power comes great responsibility. Treyarch takes another swing at at a Spider-Man videogame for the next-generation consoles

Focus not on the fact that last year's 'Spider-Man' was the ninth largest grossing film of all time despite being decidedly dull, but rather on the possible fact that its success is a clear indication of the strength and popularity of Stan Lee's hero.

Focus, also, on the fact that just as the cinematic sequel gives Sam Raimi another chance to do the web slinger justice, a videogame follow-up allows Treyarch to make up for the failures of its last Spidey instalment.

If you played it, you'll no doubt still remember its stupefying camera system. Obviously that has been an area of concern for the developer and judging from the early code **Edge** was shown, things appear far more promising at the moment, although it's worth pointing out that interior action didn't form part of the demo.

But what we did see was a very acrobatic Peter Parker swinging effortlessly from one skyscraper to the next across an impressively expansive rendition of Manhattan. The web system now utilises a pendulum physics model and web shoots attach themselves to real objects in the game world so some planning is necessary in order to navigate your environment.

You can also venture down to street level and the seamless transition from pavement to rooftop does add a sense of scale (and atmosphere) to the proceedings.

Once you're down there, there's plenty to keep you occupied. You can ignore main mission goals and engage in crime stopping subduties (help retrieve a child's balloon being **Edge**'s current favourite). These give you hero points which you can then spend on bettering your attack and manoeuvring skills. Spider-Man's combat repertoire is also improved and sees some inventive web tricks as well as some obligatory (and somewhat inappropriate) wrestling-inspired moves.

We'd still really like to see those interior sections but so far, so good.







Day and night cycles as well as weather are included. The game will ship alongside next year's 'Spider-Man 2' film and includes all of the Marvel characters featured in the movie and some guest appearances



At street level you can interact with vehicles in just about any way you'd wish to as well as engage in stopping random crimes that may occur around you

Katamari Damashi

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Namco
Developer: In-house
Origin: Japan
Release: Spring 2004 (Japan), TBC (UK)

Ever wanted to be a kleptomaniac dung beetle? Namco announces plans which will finally allow **Edge** to live the dream



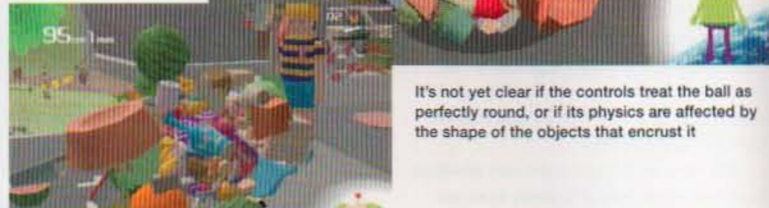


At last, a sure-fire way for picking up men (top). And, provided your ball's large enough, you can pick a car too (but that's later on in the game)

An alien prince with a head like a suppository arrives in an urban utopia to plead with its globular king. It soon becomes apparent that the only way the young prince can accomplish his mission is to roll a glue-ball around town until it gets really, really big. That old chestnut, eh?

Anything smaller than the glue ball that touches it becomes attached, and as the ball grows bigger, it becomes possible to agglomerate bigger items still. Should your ball be subject to any sharp shocks, collected items may be shaken loose from your ever expanding girth. A range of special moves – although **Edge** reckons that any movement at all from a sticky lump coated in furniture and watermelons qualifies as special – will enable you to tackle tricky obstacles.

Early word suggests that *Katamari Damashi* is very much concept lead (nevertheless it was one of the more interesting announcements at the recent PlayStation Meeting 2003) – meaning that Namco doesn't yet have much of a game to fit round its eminently unusual premise. But *Super Monkey Ball* has shown how accessible and rewarding simple analogue control can be, and there's no doubting the appeal of the slapstick charm already on show.



It's not yet clear if the controls treat the ball as perfectly round, or if its physics are affected by the shape of the objects that encrust it

Dragon Quest VIII

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Level 5
Origin: Japan
Release: TBC

Feverish speculation over a single shot of a menu screen? It must be early news on the new Dragon Quest game

If Level 5 ever allowed itself to do anything so boorish, it would have a stranglehold on the charmingly illustrated RPG market. With *Dark Cloud 2* under its belt, and *True Fantasy Live Online* forthcoming, its selection by Square Enix to take over development of the new *Dragon Quest* is a clear endorsement of the popularity of the developer's style.

It has brought a vibrant freshness to the series, ensuring that the transition to full 3D does justice to the character designs of Toriyama Akira. And while the visuals are heavily stylised, they allow for a more sophisticated level of realism – or at least of the kind of RPG realism concerned with opening wardrobes and peeking in people's bookshelves.

Longterm fans needn't worry that the new direction is indicative of any profound shake-up of the *Dragon Quest* formula. The game design is still being overseen by Yuji Horii, and the seminal turn-based battle system looks little changed from its predecessors. The game's focus will not be as field based as screen shots suggest – nine dungeons are planned.

Edge looks forward to seeing more of this unlikely alliance between old skool and new wave.



The gleam of the sun is more than just atmospherics. The game is said to feature some form of real time system, with aspects of the world changing as night follows day





Although still lined-up in traditional style, battles are now much more dynamic, with characters leaping in and out to deliver their blows

Dance: UK

Format: **PSone, PS2**
Publisher: **Bigben Interactive**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **October**

Aimed specifically at the teenage girls whose appetite for PlayStation dance games is as fearsome as their vocabulary, Dance UK aims to live up to its name





After extensive research Bigben has introduced diagonals into the traditional four-way structure. An eight-way mat is on its way from the publisher

Featuring a respectable collection of UK pop hits, as well as an extensive catalogue of specially written tracks, *Dance: UK* could well have more familiarity for its target audience than some of the more retro or global choices of its better-known competitors.

Its real distinguishing feature, however, is the planned expansion discs. Every couple of months, starting from the release of the game, compilation CDs of new tracks will be released, which Bigben hopes will extend the life of the game.

After extensive focus grouping, Bigben discovered that many girls found current dance titles a little too militaristic, a little too square-dance. In response, it has increased the reliance on the diagonal, creating routines which required **Edge** to sashay its hips a little more dramatically than it has become accustomed to. As a reflection of this shift, the presentation has become a little more *Samba de Amigo*, with instructions radiating out from a central point.

A head to head mode is included, as is an aerobics challenge, complete with a calorie counter – no doubt an attempt to appeal to the purse-holding, booty-shaking mums out there.



Well, Edge doesn't know about 'brilliant' but it's certainly been left impressed with Bigben's venture into typical Konami territory. So more of a case of 'very promising' at this stage

True Crime: Streets of LA

Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **In-house (Luxoflux)**
Origin: **US**
Release: **November 7**

Previously in **E**112, **E**125

Luxoflux's GTA clone nears completion, with things looking in reasonably good – if predictably familiar – shape



Can't be easy trying to recreate an immensely comprehensive game such as *Vice City* and include a substantial number of distinctive elements. Luxoflux doesn't seem particularly phased by the task facing it, though.

What does the developer's westside-flavoured vice city offer over its obvious rival, you ask? Well, **Edge** would need more time with code but on current form both shooting and driving duties appear to offer superior mechanics (the payoff from assigning a specific team to each of the game's three components, presumably). Crime fighting supremo Nick Kang can hold and fire two different weapons simultaneously, zoom in for precision shooting, and target multiple bad guys while slo-mo diving his way across the screen if you so wish. His driving skills are also better than Tommy Vercetti's: he can keep a car on two wheels while emptying a clip or flip it through 180 degrees, slam it into reverse and have the decency to face his pursuers while shooting them.

His fighting is also more elaborate and includes, for instance, grapple moves (you can augment his repertoire by visiting the city's dojos) but of the three, this is perhaps the least convincing element and currently remains a little clunky. Still, there should be time left for general improvement.



You earn points (for upgrades) by completing missions as well as general crime fighting. Edge isn't too sure about the attempted rape incident it witnessed though – it feels misjudged and unnecessary, particularly in a game with a less stylised visual approach than *Vice City*'s





The game offers a branching storyline – so far Edge has spotted three possible routes through the game. Expect a comprehensive hip hop score

Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior

Format: **PS2, PC**
Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **Kuju Entertainment**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **September 26**

Previously in **E**121, **E**124

Kuju's Trial by Fire approaches as release date for its Warhammer 40,000 firstperson shooter nears



Fire Warrior maintains a frantic sense of tension, but it isn't without problems – the most significant being a relatively weak arsenal, which features some poor visual/aural feedback, and the game's dark visual hue, which makes it difficult to make out what's actually going on

With the game's release date imminent, a playable preview version of *Fire Warrior* attests to some promise. In particular, Kuju has delivered on its bid to match *Medal of Honor*'s sense of martial atmosphere, delivering a bellicose battlefield cacophony to up the tension. It's slightly disappointing though, that the game also matches EA's World War II opus in the restrictive linearity of its level design. There's also little evidence of the subtly nuanced AI that was promised earlier in the game's development. To compensate, the *Halo*-derived rechargeable shield feels pretty flimsy – almost unfairly so at times, though this does heighten the sense of tension.

But the game's biggest drawbacks are its murky palette and a rather uninspiring arsenal. One of the biggest challenges players face is actually negotiating environments and acquiring targets against a backdrop of sometimes indistinguishable dark hues. Meanwhile, the faithfully recreated weaponry has somehow failed to make the transition from tabletop to videogame with any real aplomb, and it's curiously unsatisfying. Since these two aspects are fairly fundamental, it's unlikely that they'll be sorted before the game's release; it just remains to be seen whether they'll outweigh the game's other, undeniably encouraging aspects.





The *Halo*-style rechargeable shield doesn't quite work effectively because it's too lightweight in the face of enemy fire and some fairly limited AI

Tony Hawk's Underground

Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Neversoft**
Origin: **US**
Release: **November 7**

Previously in **E**127

After the refined, though ultimately lacklustre THPS4, the birdman returns in a better thought out, more appealing and genuine sequel-worthy venture





Before and after. Okay, not quite – the face mapping system is advanced, although probably not enough to manage this kind of transformation



Throughout the game the pro skaters act as your mentor. Expect the usual familiar faces to be joined by some new arrivals for the franchise. Obviously the game keeps the genre-leading *THPS* engine and **Edge** is hoping the change in approach can revitalise its interest for the series

Fed up of continually being forced to play as one of the world's finest skaters? Well now you can embark on a skating journey as a nobody looking to grind your way up the skateboarding world's rail of respectability. And it really can be you, courtesy of the game's face mapping feature and extensive body sculpting options.

So once you're in the game, what do you do? You ride the streets, you session the parks, visit the skate shop and get involved in the game's plot undercurrent which essentially gives you plenty of opportunity to impress the pro skaters and gradually increase your level of popularity.

You can increase your skills, too, by creating your own signature moves (there are six exploitable facets to these) and should your local area cease to provide you with a challenging ride, you can always hop into a car (or a number of other vehicles) and explore any of the nine expansive city-based levels.

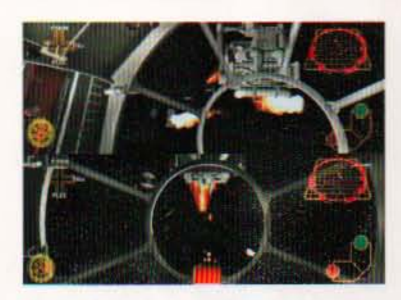
In addition to the narrative driven main mode, a number of supporting features make their usual appearance (such as the Skate Park editor returns in enhanced form). And PS2 owners get the added benefit of online play in the form of new game modes, clan support and downloadable contents. A promising package, then.

Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Activision/LucasArts
Developer: Factor 5
Origin: US
Release: October 17

Previously in E125

Factor 5 showcases its forthcoming GameCube title and **Edge** is left particularly impressed by some clever film encoding





The speeder bike sequences through the forest evoke the velocity of the 'real' thing beautifully. But Luke made it look far easier than it really is

The latest press outing for the second sequel in the *Rogue Squadron* series reveals a few more details over what was seen during May's E3 show. By now you'll know the basic components of the game: 13 missions involving flight, character or ground combat (including covert operations run on foot as Luke Skywalker, Wedge Antilles or Han Solo), as well as the ability to pilot an X-Wing, Snow speeder, AT-ST, the Millennium Falcon and ride Imperial speeder bikes. This last craft offers an identical feeling of speed as that seen in 'Return of the Jedi', and as with most other elements of the game is pleasingly atmospheric.

Typing of the films, the game uses digitised sequences from the original trilogy as its cinematics between missions and it's some of the finest encoding **Edge** has seen. At a time when episodes 'IV', 'V' and 'VI' are still not available on DVD (and if you don't happen to have your LaserDisc pressings at hand) it's heart warming to see the films on a cathode ray tube in such a high resolution format (even if only in snippet form).

Edge still hasn't been let anywhere near the controls so a gameplay appraisal remains out of the question. Nor is it currently possible to discover the many bonus and surprise elements Factor 5 promises.



Developer Factor 5 continues to push the GameCube to the edge of its technical abilities, and as such manages to extract some of the best visuals yet seen from Nintendo's console. The multiplayer modes should prove popular

Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy

Format: PC, Xbox
Publisher: Activision/LucasArts
Developer: Raven Software
Origin: US
Release: September 19 (PC), November (Xbox)

Previously in E125

It's back to school for LucasArts as the latest Jedi Knight title does little to atone for its predecessor

Jedi Academy showed a fair amount of polish at E3, with professional demonstrations emphasising the game's slick visuals and the ability to customise the appearance of characters right down to their lightsaber hilt. Nevertheless, in spite of raising hopes that it might atone for *Jedi Knight II*, closer inspection reveals *Academy* to be little more than a return to the fairly plentiful shortcomings of Kyle Katarn's last outing.

Katarn returns for this sequel to guide your character in the ways of the Force, and he's just as irritating as he was the last time around. Equally irritating is the developer's apparent predilection for Harry Potter, to judge by cut-scenes that give Luke Skywalker's Jedi Academy on Yavin the feel of an Enid Blyton boarding school – mainly in the shape of a breathlessly excitable and inevitably hasty fellow pupil.

More substantial problems arise from the return of flabby platforming action and floaty, imprecise controls. Still, level design seems largely superior to the obtuse architecture of *Jedi Knight II*, and a hub structure provides players with more choice. Other neat touches include the ability to ride Tauntauns, and wield two lightsabers, or double-bladed lightsabers. Entertaining enough, but not a return to the brilliance of the series' earliest titles.



Jedi Academy is certainly more polished than its predecessor, but it still suffers from the same set of fundamental flaws; namely a fairly inadequate implementation of thirdperson control and a fairly uninspiring display of level design technique





Still, the game certainly looks the part, and characters have access to a range of lightsaber fighting styles inspired by the movies

Prescreen Alphas

This month's announcements and updates...

Carve

Format: Xbox
Publisher: TBC
Developer: Argonaut Games




Since **Edge**'s visit in E124, Argonaut has been fine-tuning the wake physics and perfecting the Live set-up (including a coop mode). Also, a publisher announcement is now imminent

The Movies

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox, GC
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Lionhead Studios




Peter Molyneux has big plans for this movie studio simulator. So big, in fact, that **Edge** suspects the project will need scaling back a little. (You'll find more detail in **Equip** PC)

Metal Slug Advance

Format: Game Boy Advance
Publisher: SNK Playmore
Developer: In-house




An all new game, *Metal Slug*'s first handheld outing since the Neo Geo may let you play as a girl and collect stat-enhancing cards, but the action, style and humour remain

Painkiller

Format: PC, Xbox
Publisher: Dreamcatcher Games
Developer: People Can Fly




It doesn't look like the most complex FPS ever made, but *Painkiller*'s ginormous bosses have to be seen to be believed. The never ending onslaught will have you reaching for the Anadin

Monster Hunter

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house (Production Studio 1)




Edge is currently chasing more details on this online-friendly, impressive looking new title (shown originally at this year's E3 in video form). It's a big dragons, big weapons extravaganza

Castlevania: Lament of Innocence

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house (KCET)




Castlevania and 3D have never mixed well, but Konami hopes to end its camera woes with fixed, moving and side-on perspectives. Plus whips, switches and holy water, of course

Broken Sword III: The Sleeping Dragon

Format: PC, PS2, GC, Xbox
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Revolution




Revolution is in the final stages of checking the details and tweaking the presentation for the game's promising advance into 3D. Expect a more detailed investigation next month

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: In-house (Paris)




Ubi Soft has announced that the PS2 is to get its own shot at online squad combat, incorporating full voice command systems, 31 multiplayer maps and two distinct singleplayer campaigns



9/11 is a joke

Is it disgusting to base a game around the destruction of the World Trade Centre, or could it be seen as a tribute?

An *Unreal Tournament 2003* mod, *9-11 Survivor* is unlikely to find many supporters but **Edge** is more interested in the questions such projects provoke

On seeing a firstperson shooter at a demo day last year, a curious **Edge** asked the developer how it felt about profiting from a situation in which lots of people died. Its response was that this could be seen as both entertainment and education; that by painting very real interactive pictures, people could understand the horror of the events, and the bravery of those who experienced them. Or, to put it another way, videogames can take the role of a modern day encyclopedia, allowing insight into situations otherwise ethereal, bringing them to people who might otherwise never know.

No space for complex moral debate here; is it disgusting to base a game around the destruction of the World Trade Centre, or could it be seen as a tribute? Could it show with terrifying – and perspective shifting – clarity some of the horror of those events, make them more real to those to whom it's just a spectacular special effect, or is it as morally outrageous to recreate the death of some 3,000 people for free as it is to make money from the thousands who died in the D-Day landings? **Edge** doesn't know the answers – it just asks the questions, and provides you with some facts.

9-11 Survivor is an *Unreal Tournament 2003* mod which traps players on random levels of the burning building and challenges them to escape. The catch? Sometimes there's no way out, and gamers have to decide whether to perish in the flames or throw themselves from the upper levels. "Luck decided who lived and died in the World Trade Centre," the website reads, "and [so it will] in *9-11 Survivor*." Digusting? Misguided? Hoax? Possibly all three, but the questions it provokes are still unanswered. Read more at www.kinematic.org/911.html



Score Wars

Cheats, continues, walkthroughs... any fool can cut corners and follow a recipe. Back in the golden age, only points meant prizes. Arcade culture may be obsolete, but hi-score gaming is alive and twitching...

In late 1982, 'Life' magazine herded a gaggle of gawky teenagers out into the street near a videogame arcade called Twin Galaxies in Ottumwa, Iowa. Six game cabinets were wheeled into shot and a photographer recorded an unlikely composition of man and machine, softened a little by a few local cheerleaders.

It was a publicity pose to kick off a touring Electronic Circus of America's elite arcade gamers – world record holders only. The plan was to establish a mobile freakshow of gaming excellence, with the 12 circus members dropping in on major cities to compete before paying audiences. They were salaried ($250 (£157) a week), and, for each venue, they would all be out to get their twitchy digits on a share of a $5,000 (£3,137) cashpot. "The bus broke down," says **Walter Day**, Twin Galaxies' owner and Electronic Circus consultant. "We had big, big plans to turn it into the US National videogame team and we were going to face off with anyone who wanted to play us. The bus broke down and so we crammed into a car and eventually made it to Washington, where we visited the Italian embassy and challenged Italy to a videogame world championship. They were very polite..."

The grand idealism of the Electronic Circus was quickly scuppered by stalling sponsors and 'union problems'. Team morale was curdled when *Donkey Kong* record-holder **Steve Sanders** admitted that he had lied about his score to get on to the tour ("I got greedy"). Sanders was ostracised by the rest of the crew and banned from submitting any future records. Others fared better. Eric Ginner (*Crystal Castles* – 857,689) was hired by Atari to star in *Pole Position* ads. Leo Daniels (*Asteroids* – 40,101,910) was eventually promoted to vice-president of an arcade-operator chain. Daniels, a clean-cut, all-American chic-geek, was described as "the Jimmy Connors of videogames."

Continued



Photography: Enrico Ferorelli


HOTEL
Mr. Quick HAMBURGERS
Self Service
MS. PAC-MAN
MIDWAY
TUTANKHAM
DONKEY KONG
OHS
83









'Life' magazine (top) first brought these gawky teenagers into the limelight. A few years on, Steve Sanders, Billy Mitchell and Robert Mruzcek stand in front of the machines that made them stars, and prove that fame is not debilitating

Ned Troide (*Defender* – 72,999,975) was the bad boy. The original anti-gaming media scapegoat, Troide confessed to 18 counts of burglary and was jailed for two years. Moral panic-happy ears pricked at the news that Troide exchanged some of his swag for videogame tokens. The implication was that he was stealing to finance this evil gaming 'habit'. Troide's father offered the ideal retort: "It's baloney. Ned's so good at the games, he doesn't need extra money to play them."

In the early-'80s, at the peak of the 'golden age', arcade-game designers were under pressure to create immediate, compulsive games which were tough enough to suck in the coinage without intimidating less talented players. Initially, a 'hi-score' was a basic measure of the player's mastery of the machine. But designers underestimated their audience and, in some cases, set ludicrously low upper score limits (*Asteroids* rolls over at 100,000, a routine score for above-average players). So, once the machine is 'beaten', what then?

Exidy's *Star Fire* (1978) was the first coin-op to incorporate entry of a three-letter signature onto a hi-score table. At a glance, players could compare skills, and have something – and someone – to shoot for each time they inserted coins. But the local leaderboard effect could only be maintained until a machine was switched off and the score table reset.

In 1980, a 27-year-old pinball designer, Eugene Jarvis, was asked by Williams Electronics to conceive a videogame. After toying with various *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids* clones,

"Non-resetting hi-score tables brought a kind of social order to the chirruping chaos of amusement arcades. Localised cults flourished around arcades, even towns"



Exidy's *Star Fire* was the first coin-op that allowed players to input their initials, but there were tears as soon as the plug was pulled

Jarvis came up with *Defender* – a technically ground-breaking game which also pushed all the right commercial buttons – it was difficult enough to dispose of casual players after only a minute or two, but also had the charisma to keep them coming back for more.

Crucially, Jarvis drew on his history and incorporated a pinball-style battery back-up memory system to store an 'All-Time Greatest' hi-score table alongside the volatile 'Today's Greatest' list. Now, the classier players could see their scores dominate on an individual machine, in a particular arcade. Non-resetting hi-score tables brought a strange kind of social order to the chirruping chaos of amusement arcades. Localised cults of personality flourished around games, arcades, even towns. It was hi-score turf war – particularly in

Table toppers

Fancy your hi-score chances? These are the guys to beat. Twin Galaxies (www.twingalaxies.com) only accepts score performances submitted – in full – on videotape. A note from your mum will not do...

Classic

Donkey Kong
947,200
Steve Wiebe
Redmond, US



Wiebe bagged this back at the end of June. The game has a notorious 'kill screen' (Level 117), which doesn't give the player enough time to finish. Twin Galaxies estimates a theoretical maximum score of around 1,084,000.

Pac-Man
3,333,360
Billy Mitchell
Florida, US



The much publicised 'perfect' game (256 levels, every bonus prize, every blue ghost, no lives lost). Two other Pac-freaks have been there, but Mitchell did it first – in July, 1999 ("I understand the behaviour of the ghosts and am able to manipulate them into any corner of the board I choose").

Defender
76,377,300
Bert Jennings
North Carolina, US



A 60-hour red-eye marathon. If you manage to reach 990,000, the game awards an extra life for every subsequent point scored – and then clocks back to zero at 1,000,000 for you to do it all over again.

Asteroids
41,336,440
Scott Safran
Pennsylvania, US



The longest-standing record since Twin Galaxies began keeping score. Safran was 15-years-old at the time (November 13, 1982). After having his game verified, he disappeared and Walter Day spent years trying to track him down. Sadly, Day found out last year that Safran had died in a fall in 1989.

Robotron
348,691,680
Brian King
Colorado, US



A long-standing marathon performance on one of the most hectic games of all-time. Pity those poor synapses. Prospective hi-scorers with lives to lead should consider the 'Tournament Settings' (difficulty five, five lives, no extras) world record of 838,475.

the US, where mall-based arcades made gaming more accessible than in the UK. So, from Today's Greatest to All-Time Greatest… how about World's Greatest?

Day realised that, despite the global popularity of videogames, no one was really bothering to verify and document the more extreme feats. With the help of US magazines such as 'Computer Games' and 'JoyStik', he set himself up as official scorekeeper. "The magazines and manufacturers started to refer all enquiries to us. We began to create and enforce the rules, and monitor the scores. At first, we insisted on signed affidavits from witnesses. Then, we started to show up in person to verify performances – and from that, came our network of Twin Galaxies referees made up of, mostly, expert gamers who knew exactly what to look out for – point-leeching, bug exploits, etc."

At the Twin Galaxies flagship Iowa arcade, Day installed a 16-by-18-foot bank of TV screens to monitor world-class scores on key games. Magazines regularly tracked the 'electronic scoreboard', and the presence of Twin Galaxies referees convinced other arcades to open late for record-breaking 'marathon' (60-hour-plus) performances.

The fascination with hi-score gaming reached a peak when arcade owners started to run 'Hi-Score of the Week' competitions, with prizes of game tokens. Many of the better players would form mini-clans and accumulate enough tokens to be able to sell a few and make a little money. *Tapper* world record holder (9,100,175) **Gregory Erway** even remembers arcade owners hiring elite gamers to train up less skilled customers. "Our local arcade brought in all the LaserDisc games and, because I'd been the first to finish *Dragon's Lair*, the owner gave me a bunch of free quarters (painted red to distinguish them from customer money). I'd play in front of other players and then give them a free credit and coach them as they played. Even today, I still find the odd quarter with traces of red paint on it."

The fun wouldn't last. In the mid-'80s, when the market flooded and crashed, the videogame arcade ceased to exist





In 1980 Eugene Jarvis (top) and *Defender* (the first game with memory back-up) rocked! Meanwhile, 'JoyStik' ran the first hi-scores

Web Warriors

The spirit of competitive classic gaming lives on. Join them…

Twin Galaxies – www.twingalaxies.com
Search the scoreboard, watch the record-breaking game videos (more to be added soon), chat to the record breakers on the forum. The number one authority on hi-score gaming.

MAME Action Replay Page – http://marp.retrogames.com
Pretty much the MAME companion to Twin Galaxies' arcade hi-score documentation. It helps if you know your MAME (lots of faffing with version synchronisation), but it's a massive competitive community.

The Llamasoft Lleague – www.llamasoft.co.uk
A friendly, vibrant forum has sprung up off the back of Jeff Minter's recent re-emergence. The 'We Are The Lleague' thread hosts an ongoing ten-game season cycle which takes in classic coin-ops (via MAME) and occasional retro computer games (Spectrum, C64, Atari). It's currently running a keyboard-shattering 'summer season' of *Track 'n' Field/Hyper Sports*.

Scorelord –
www.theurrow.freeserve.co.uk/zzap/scorelord/scorelord.html
Ex-'Zzap 64'-ers will recognise ex-editor Gordon Houghton's alter-ego as the lofty chronicler of the C64 elite. He's still accepting submissions and plenty of records have fallen in the last few months (*IK+*, *Paradroid*, *Dropzone*, *Attack of the Mutant Camels*).

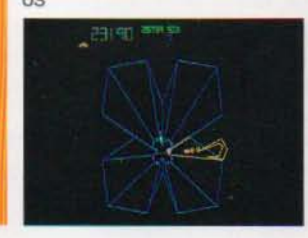
Arcade Perfect – www.arcadeperfect.com
An excellent, forum-based site currently beginning a MAME-based classics tournament.

Shmups – www.shmups.com
Hardcore shooter fans' forum. Generally accommodating and full of gaming tips and hi-score comparisons. Features an accompanying ftp site of Shmups members' gaming videos.

Cinemarcade – http://www.cinemarcade.com/arcade84.html
No competition here, but this site features 'Arcade '84', a must-see film of a fly-through a US mall video-arcade circa 1984. It incorporates actual footage from the games and it will make you sob for the good old days like a gin-addled grandad.

Classic

Tempest
1,728,329
Hector Vazquez
US



Probably the most reachable classic world record around. A recent player managed close to 1.5m points starting from Level 9. Vazquez began his game at Level 81 – which yields a bigger bonus.

Joust
107,216,700
James Vollandt
California, US



The longest verified marathon world record. Achieved in 1985, Vollandt spent almost 68 hours playing – without using the classic cheap trick of pterodactyl hunting.

Galaxian
389,770
Perry Rodgers
California, US



Rodgers is a key golden-age gamer, and many of his other scores still stand. The first 300,000 points of this score were gained on his first life.

Space Invaders
48,480
Perry Rodgers
California, US



Notoriously tricky to referee, due to the 10,000-point roll-over. Rodgers chief (very risky) tactic is to pick off the invaders at their lowest point for a higher score.

Star Wars
300,007,894
Robert Mruzcek
New York, US



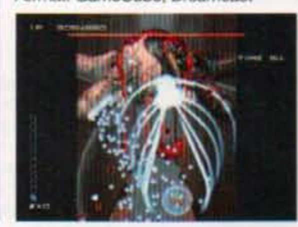
A stormer – the second-highest is almost 200m points off the pace. Mruzcek's secret? "In the trench, the only part of you that can graze the wall is the central area of the cursor. Thus, you can make it look as if you are almost touching a wall when you actually are not… plus you avoid getting hit in the process."

Console nation

The pressure on developers to produce shorter games with reduced lead times has arguably led to a resurgence in hi-score gaming. Here are a few modern games capable of keeping obsessives up at night...

Console

Ikaruga
Format: GameCube, Dreamcast



Normal mode, three lives, no continues. At the time of writing, the highest Net Ranking score is 34,303,820 ('CCB', Japan), though 'WIZ' scores higher on the Appreciate DVD.

Metroid Prime
Format: GameCube



Henru Wang had a completion time of one hour, 46 minutes verified by a Twin Galaxies referee in May of this year. Wang subverted the sequential nature of the game by using strategic bomb placing to exploit unforeseen shortcuts.

Crazy Taxi 1, 2 and 3
Format: Dreamcast, Xbox



Twin Galaxies' chief referee Robert Mruzcek is putting up his own money to anyone who can achieve a pre-set score in four sections of the game. One of the 'Crazy Bounties' offers $100 to anyone who can achieve a 400-yard or more 'Crazy Jump' in Dreamcast *Crazy Taxi* (current record – 380.52yds).

Grand Theft Auto III
Format: PlayStation2

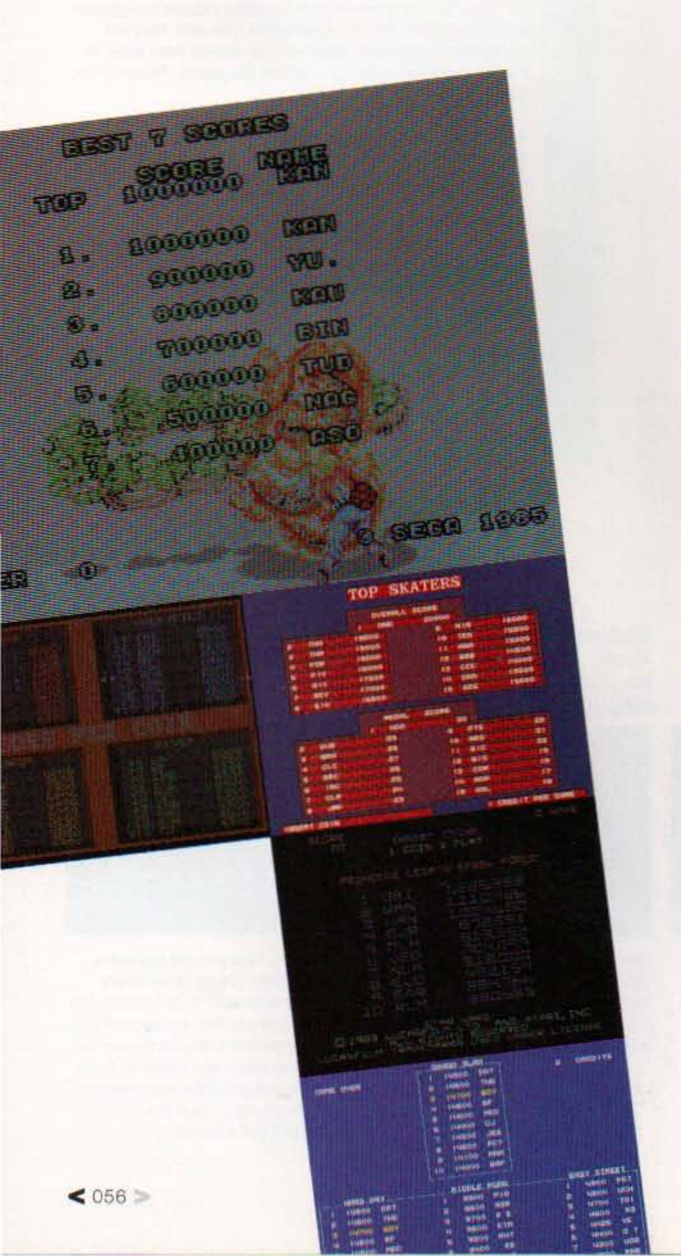


In April this year, Texan Mike Morrow finished the entire game in two hours, 47 minutes, six seconds.

Super Monkey Ball
Format: GameCube



Thanks to the inbuilt replay function, *SMB* has an enormous cult following on the net, with several sites devoted to videos of staggering completion times. Some of the best we've seen include – Monkey Target (five rounds help on, wheel off) – 7,000, Beginner Level 10 – 11,376 total score and Master Level 10 – 11,400 total score. Watch and weep at Monkey Ball Video Central (www.ajshakesby.co.uk/smbvids).



as a natural habitat for gamers. As home consoles grew in popularity, the coin-op's culture of purity and immediacy struggled to translate. Game design evolved to incorporate living room-friendly concepts (save-game, cheat modes, customisable difficulty settings, etc). The thrill of one-on-one multiplayer gaming led to the rise of beat 'em ups and, eventually, firstperson shooters. The notion of playing a game for score and score alone seemed increasingly outmoded and one dimensional.

When the PlayStation appeared in 1995, Namco's *Ridge Racer* featured a playable version of 1979 shooter *Galaxian* on the loading screen. Soon after, Digital Eclipse's *Williams Arcade Classics* appeared on PC, featuring arcade-perfect emulations of the five iconic Williams coin-ops (*Defender*, *Stargate*, *Joust*, *Robotron* and *Sinistar*) – and one curiosity (*Bubbles*). The 20/30-something nostalgia rush was dizzying but gimmicky. The games played fine, but the scale was modest.

For gamers weaned on *Galaxians* and *Asteroids*, 1997 was a seminal year. A reclusive Italian engineer, Nicola Salmoria, wrote an MS-DOS program called MAME – Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator – which could read data from various coin-op ROMs and, more or less, perfectly emulate the gameplay (see 'The MAME game', **E**115). Salmoria released the MAME code as open source and, with the internet flourishing, it was pounced on by programmers eager to expand its portfolio and add Windows/Mac-friendly frontends. What began as a documentation project quickly turned into an online phenomenon. As more classic coin-ops became accessible, gamers tiring of the flashy emptiness of the likes of the *Tomb Raider* series were introduced to thousands of simple, compulsive, stripped-down games where score was the only measure of skill.

With its inbuilt gameplay record and snapshot functions, MAME seemed custom-built to revive the spirit of competitive gaming. Vast online communities built up around classic coin-op leagues. The MAME Action Replay Page (MARP) operates a ranking system based on MAME score recording files. There are regular tournaments, and an ongoing 'Olympiad' strand, where players can submit game recordings on behalf of their nationality. MARP is a little aloof and often seems bogged down by complex guidelines, but it is to the internet what the Twin Galaxies scoreboard was to arcade gaming – a global standardisation.

> "Multiplayer gaming led to the rise of beat 'em ups and firstperson shooters. The notion of playing a game for score and score alone seemed increasingly outmoded"



By all accounts Mike Morrow can finish *GTAIII* in less than three hours. Which is probably why he didn't get round to re-decorating

Console

TLoZ: A Link to the Past
Format: SNES, GBA



In April this year, Texan Michael Damiani finished the game in one hour, 57 minutes, 15 seconds – without using the notorious glitch which allows bypass of some of the Maiden Gems. Practise on the GBA version, refine your time, tape yourself finishing the SNES version, send it to Twin Galaxies. Easy.

Viewtiful Joe
Format: GameCube



Despite the lack of replayable levels, *Viewtiful Joe* is definitely a score-galore game. The trick is to save after each level and repeatedly play until you get the magic 'V' rating. There's also a practically infinite aspect to stylishly dispatching the bad guys – more chaos, more combos, more scoring. Check the ever-growing threads on gaming forums for hi-scores.

F-Zero GX
Format: GameCube



The much-hyped arcade link-up may have been scrapped due to a lack of western arcades to link up with, but, once the import action steps up, expect plenty of online hi-scoreage. Start at www.fzerocentral.com

Wario Ware Inc
Format: Game Boy Advance



Whether you're shaking the doggy's paws or making the cat snooze, hi-score is everything. The Planetgamecube.com forums have an ambitious hi-score table, and to start you off, take a shot at **Edge**'s 'Metroid' game record – 214.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
Format: Various

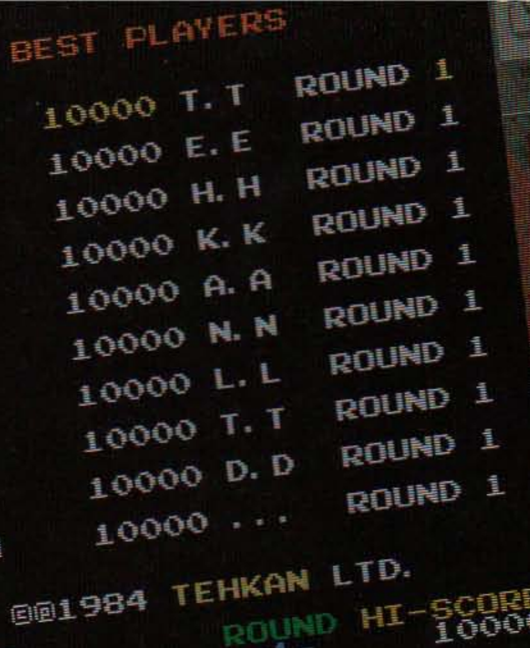


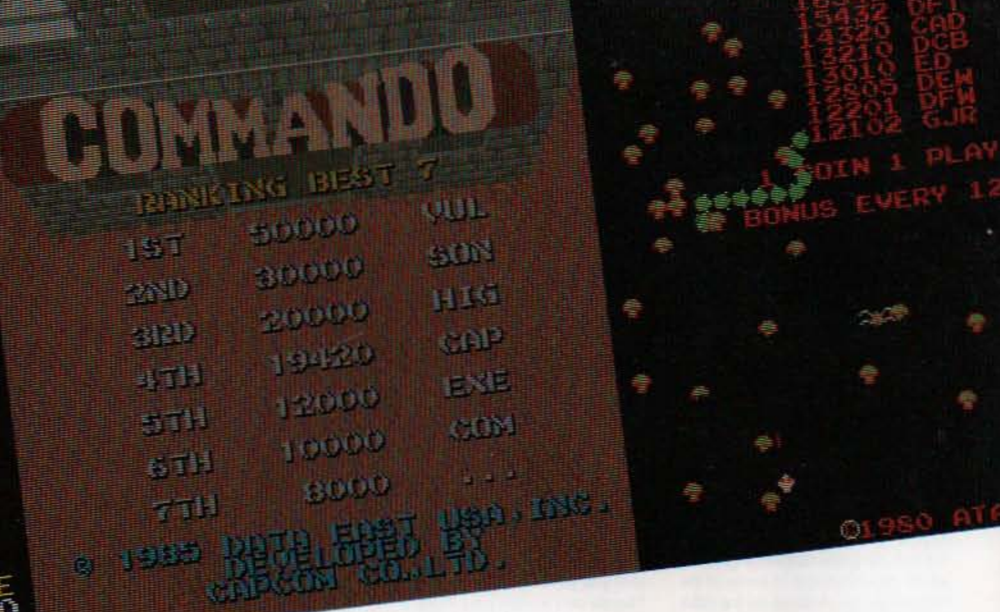
So, just how good are you at the *Tony Hawk's* games? If you can achieve 1m points in a single combo then you can consider yourself great. Those that can total 10m points in one run are true masters. Of course, many have exploited badly thought out bits of scenery (like the baggage line in *THPS3*) to score the really sick scores (think 20m in one combo). But there's always room for improvement.

Console gaming is slowly starting to come round to the appeal of hi-score as status symbol. Through the Twin Galaxies home-gaming section, players have sought ingenious ways to exploit competitive angles in otherwise open-ended games (time trial, fast completion, completely clearing out a game's collectables – and then doing it again, quicker than anyone else).

Significantly, a strong internet following has built up around many Japanese shoot 'em ups (*Esp Ra De*, *Dangun Feveron*, *Psyvariar*, *DoDonPachi*) because the games are classically designed – extremely tough, but with multiple layers of score maximisation potential. Websites such as shmups.com seek to demystify some of the games' more esoteric aspects and regularly feature home recordings of outstanding hi-scoring gameplay.

Thanks to the genre's breakthrough game, *Ikaruga*, these shooters are finding their way from a vibrant Japanese arcade







Real-world retro

The old-skool arcades may have disappeared from the mainstream, but a bit of burrowing reveals a lively underground scene...

UK

Retrokade – www.retrokade.com

Based on the south coast near Portsmouth, Retrokade is a members-only old-skool arcade run by two UK Video Arcade Collectors who want to see their beloved machines played by equally passionate gamers, rather than languish in dusty basements and workshops. There are 100 games (including rare stuff like a *Discs of Tron* kiosk), with 55 on display at any given moment. Membership is £50 a year, which entitles weekend visits and – coming soon – evening events. There are also growing rumours of Retrokade hosting a Twin Galaxies-branded UK Classic Gaming Championship.

Also try: Arcade Mania (www.arcademania2003.co.uk)

US

Funspot – www.funspotnh.com/cg-cgcentral1.htm

A superb retro arcade in New Hampshire, Funspot hosts an annual classics tournament in May/June, with several mini-tournaments throughout the year. Its collection is vast – around 150 machines – all set in agreeably dark and noisy surroundings, with attendant shopping, indoor golf and bingo. The annual Funspot tournament attracts many of the world's best gamers and several world records have been broken there.

Also try: Classic Gaming Expo (www.cgexpo.com)
California Extreme (www.caextreme.org)
Videotopia (www.videotopia.com)

culture via import and internet word-of-mouth to, in some cases, official western release (*Ikaruga*, *Psyvariar*, *R-Type Final*, *DoDonPachi*). *Ikaruga* is the finest example of a slick, thoroughly modern-looking and sounding game with its soul rooted firmly in the past. A reasonable player can blast and bluster their way through the first couple of levels, but the game can only be exploited for a hi-score through intense study and practice.

The Net Ranking password system in the GameCube version of *Ikaruga* looks to be the beginning of another form of hi-score standardisation. As online console play becomes more sophisticated, direct peer-to-peer gaming is turning away from the standard firstperson shooter-style realtime combat play, in favour of score-based ranking systems.

"*Burnout 2*'s Xbox Live ranking system was suggested by Microsoft Europe," says **Alex Ward**, creative manager at Criterion Games. "They wanted us to incorporate online play and we said it was too early, so they asked us to do an online scoreboard. Crash mode is particularly popular because the hi-scoring is fairly abstract – you have to work out how to maximise it for yourself. The beauty of an online hi-score table is, the minute you get a hi-score, you can check your ranking on many levels – among your friends, nationally, internationally... *Burnout 2* shows that an online score table can give a game a commercial boost. Microsoft in America were sceptical. They wanted peer-on-peer gameplay – race against someone in Australia or something. But the scoreboard has been a massive success. The shocking thing is that more people use the *Burnout 2* scoreboard on Xbox Live than other games which offer full live play."

So, from a novelty flavour for retrogaming to gaming culture so firmly influenced by retro design that even Microsoft is taking notice. The classic coin-op scene has hit its 25th anniversary and, along with the veterans wallowing in nostalgia, a new generation is discovering the joy of purity and personal bests.

"Many of the '80s champions are being drawn back into the fold," says Day. "They're trying to break their records of 20-odd years ago. Even more significantly, newer, younger players are also breaking records which have stood for many years. In the last eight weeks, we've had three major world records broken – the most high profile of which, *Donkey Kong* was even featured on CNN. We're in a second golden age, where hi-scores are back in a big way."

The beauty of an online hi-score table is, the minute you get a hi-score, you can check your ranking on many level – among your friends, nationally, internationally...



Edge's

If **Edge** was God, and it's a rare day when it doesn't wish it were, these would be its commandments. This isn't game theory. These are rules that **Edge** believes are universally and inarguably applicable to all and any games. That some of the laws listed here may seem mundane doesn't diminish their potential to make a great game good and a bad game unplayable.

But although **Edge** stands by its proclamations, it also expects that in another ten years, this list will look laughably obsolete. Hopefully, half of the things on it will have been rendered irrelevant by advances of gaming technology, and the other half will have become so deeply enshrined in game design that no one even thinks of them.

I The First Cut Is The Deepest

No player, under any circumstances, should be forced to sit through the same cut-scene twice. Even if it's really, really pretty. But by the same measure, no cut-scene should be designed so that a player can skip it inadvertently. **Edge** proposes a system that solves both problems. The first button press pauses the scene, and brings up a menu which offers a choice of skipping or resuming.

II Knock Three Times

Crates should only ever take one hit. **Edge** isn't quite sure whether crates should still be a staple of gaming, but it's certain that when they do occur, they ought to be more readily batterable. Hitting a crate isn't interesting or skilful or fun, it's a way of telling the game you would like the crate to open. Making you do it more than once is downright rude.

Ten Commandments

III Please, Make It Stop

When a game saves, and what it saves, and how often it does so are some of the most critical tools a designer has to control the pacing and challenge of a game. **Edge** isn't asking anybody to mess with that. But it should be possible to suspend a game at any point, and pick it up from the same point the next time you play. **Edge** appreciates that this is far from simple to implement, but as games become bigger and gamers become busier, it needs to become the norm not the exception. Game Boy games that ship without the Sleep mode implemented are especially vulnerable to **Edge**'s wrath.

IV Cruel and Unusual

Don't punish failure with frustration. One of the signature features of a good videogame is that defeat re-doubles your determination to succeed. Every knock out, spun out, timed out or wipe out ought to ignite in the player a desperation to try again. So why put 17 menu selections between them and a restart? One button press – possibly two – is the most **Edge** is prepared to tolerate between itself and a second chance of victory.

V It's Behind You

Or rather, it isn't. If you give camera control to the player, don't require them to be cinematographic perfectionists. They may want to perform sweeping 360° shots, they may want to peer round corners at acute and sneaky angles, but mostly they want to see where they're going. Let them centre the camera behind them with one reliable click.

VI The Sound of Silence

Game music has the potential to convey atmosphere, emotion and information to the player. But it also has the power to infuriate, enrage and bore. No matter how good, music will always wear thin before the game itself does, because even the most fixed of gameplay patterns is altered on each occasion by player action. The song, however, remains the same, and so the player must always be able to turn it off.

VII Choke Chain Training

The point of tutorials is to provide an opportunity for experimentation and familiarisation within the gameworld. **Edge** doesn't appreciate being hectored and bullied and harassed. Don't time players, or penalise them for trying out a few extra buttons, or force a restart just because a player dared to deviate from the script.

VIII Out of Your Hands

One of the most delicate tasks a game designer faces is configuring an ideal control scheme, but **Edge** can see no persuasive argument for denying players the chance to tweak it for themselves. Games that put select where you expect cancel or that offer 16 useless presets are shooting themselves in the foot. Or, more precisely, games that don't give the choice of whether or not to invert are most likely shooting players in their own foot.

IX Previously on Edge's Sofa

There's nothing more frustrating than having to give up on a game simply because you left it for a week or two, and can't remember where to go next. Games should always offer a way of refreshing your memory on your last few in-game accomplishments. **Edge** would like to make clear that this isn't the same thing as a flashing, shrieking nagbot that you can't switch off and won't stop telling you where to go even when you're already going there.

X The Ten Commandments: The Final Proclamation

Edge has had it with colons, and the simpering subtitles that trail after them. No more *Bland Franchise Follow-up: The Verbing of the Noun*. One game, one name – a simple enough equation and one which there is never any justification to break. If a sequel is fresh enough to deserve a name of its own, then give it a name of its own. If it's loyal to its originator, then proudly trumpet the fact with a number and leave it at that. Heck, it's good enough for **E**128. Or should that be **E**CXXVIII?



What was your best game of all time back in 1993?
Street Fighter II? Defender? Fat Worm Blows a Sparky?
Edge looks at where games have come from in the last ten years
and provides the definitive list of the best games of all time by genre.
Turn the page to see what's top of the hit parade...

It felt right. How better to celebrate **Edge**'s tenth anniversary than to determine the best games of all time. A significant undertaking and one that we haven't attempted for over three years (**E**80). The time was ripe to assess whether the 'next'-generation platforms had generated videogame excellence to match any of the titles listed in **Edge**'s top 100 list back in January 2000.

You will also note that we decided to organise this list by genre. On the surface you'd expect this to prove unproblematic. Think of the most common genres – FPS, RTS, beat 'em up, puzzle – and just slot in the ten best games into each category. But if anything, the excercise proved just how sophisticated and multifaceted videogames have become. Dividing games into genres gave us an opportunity to divine the very essence of gaming. It turned out to be daunting, illuminating and generated more arguments than was good for the team's sanity. On the following pages you'll find a brief definition of each individual genre, but an outline of our reasoning seems appropriate.

The FPS is the perfect illustration of how videogames struggle against simple classification. It's one of the most popular 'genres', but the term is now associated with almost every game that is viewed from a firstperson perspective. But consider how different *Doom* is from, say, *Perfect Dark* or *Deus Ex*. In judging where these games fall it's vital that we look at what constitutes their 'core' gameplay values, rather than the perspective from which we view them.

In this respect the search for what constitutes the core gameplay dynamic became our guiding principle. For this reason the term FPS is unhelpful. Games such as *Doom*, *Quake III* and *Halo* demand the player quickly acquire targets then eliminate them. It's the same level of reflex skill required for games like *Defender* and *R-Type*. No matter how advanced the AI, games like *Halo* are Shooters by any other name.

The Adventure is **Edge**'s broadest category. Forgo your perspectival prejudices, and you'll realise that *Metal Gear Solid*, *Splinter Cell* and *Thief* share the same core gameplay values. Yes, they all encourage you to use stealth, but the significant element linking them is the exploration of space and use of gadgets and items to further progress. From fixing rusty fuse boxes in *Resident Evil* to avoiding goats in *Broken Sword*, Adventure games make similar intellectual demands: spacial appreciation, exploration and problem solving via the use of objects.

The RPG is another genre that we seem to instinctively recognise. It's clear that statistics are a factor, whether it be upgrading weapons for extra damage or increasing your party's summoning power. But what is more significant is that the character/s have undergone significant life changing experiences, and have developed over the course of the game – often signified by the increase in skills and character properties. In this respect *Deus Ex*, *Final Fantasy VII* and *Dungeon Master* are RPGs. Clearly, other games have 'stat' increases – *The Legend of Zelda*, *Rocky*, *GTA: Vice City*. But, crucially, it's not the factor that defines them.

From here things get a little easier. Platform games centre on titles that ask the player to negotiate environments for progress; Sports games includes 'real-world' sports simulations, more leisurely pursuits, such as those found in *DoA Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, and futuristic sports; while Strategy games include management titles, simulations and RTS games. Racing, Puzzle, Rhythm action and Beat 'em ups were the least contentious of the genres.

Categorisation of art necessarily involves some intellectual gymnastics; we will always be left with grey areas. If anything, games such as *GTA: Vice City* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* demonstrate just how rich and complex the form has become.

Whatever you feel about our genre classifications, we believe that the following 100 games need to be in the library of any discerning gamer.

TEN TOP TENS

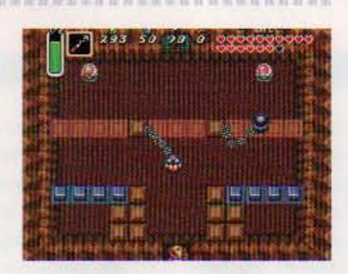
Adventure: The emphasis is on the blend of exploration and object-based puzzles. Progress is made through investigation while the cerebral challenge of unlocking areas via the use of gadgets, keys or similar items leads to a gradual exposition of the gamespace. Combat is often a significant adjunct to the exploration.



The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past

Still as fresh in **Edge**'s mind as its delicious creamery colours. Close your eyes and the light world and the dark world slot together like sheets of the most beautiful Lego ever conceived. Plenty of games contain puzzles. Only *A Link to the Past* is set inside one.

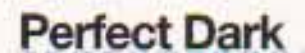
- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1991**



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

First time through it's engaging and intricate, but there's a secret at the heart of *Symphony* that makes it unique. After defeating Richter Belmont it's possible to invert the castle by triggering a special event. This transforms the structure and allows the player to achieve over a 200 per cent rating. Genius.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **Konami**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1997**



Perfect Dark

An FPS adventure that continually varies its demands on the player, offers superlative (and refreshingly inventive) gadget implementation and has time for extracurricular duties such as a co-op mode, minigame challenges and one of the most comprehensive set of multiplayer options around.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Rare**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**

Ico

Is there another game that's capable of evoking the depth and range of feeling engendered by guiding Yorda through her exquisitely modelled home? **Edge** would be hard pressed to think of one. Very few games have quite the capacity to leave such a yawning emotional chasm in their wake.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **SCEE**
- Developer: **SCEI**
- Release: **2001**

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Drive-bys accompanied by the caterwauling Kate Bush and drug drops in the rain enhanced by Jan Hammer, there are few games that resonate so deeply with so many players. *Vice City* improved on the original by letting the player buy properties and supporting the action with evocative music.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **Rockstar**
- Developer: **Rockstar North**
- Release: **2002**

Super Metroid

The awful scrichity creaking on the opening screen still makes **Edge** shiver. The game unfolds with masterful precision. Exploring Zebes enhances your mobility, weaponry and knowledge, increasing your mastery of the world in perfectly judged increments, until at last you stalk its eerie corridors with confidence.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1994**

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Find yourself whistling the Song of Time walking to work, or see potential rupees in thatches of grass? *Ocarina of Time* is one of those games that infects your imagination. Epona, Lonlon Ranch, Fairy Fountains, the Lost Woods, Kakariko Village: Link's first 3D adventure remains the most enthralling.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1998**

Shenmue

In spite of superficial RPG stylings, *Shenmue* is defined by Ryo's exploration of his expanding environment. Genre justification aside, it ranks as one of the most absorbing and edifying videogames ever created, even in the face of play mechanics that, viewed dispassionately, ought to be quite banal.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sega-AM2**
- Release: **2000**

Resident Evil 0

An archetypal example of the interweaving of narrative exposition and topographical progress that characterises the best adventure games. It marks a return to the more considered approach that gave way to an unsatisfying action-oriented emphasis in later episodes in the series.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Metroid Prime

Even if you gouged the game out of the middle, *Prime* would still recommend itself: the gorgeous mapping system, the glory of the visors, the convincing decay of a civilisation. But the game remains, each new ability calling out to your inner Magellan, each new weapon sating your inner Rambo.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **Retro Studios**
- Release: **2002**



■ Finalists: *Blade Runner*; *Broken Sword*; *Devil May Cry*; *Fatal Frame*; *Half-Life*; *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*; *Luigi's Mansion*; *Metal Gear Solid*; *O.TO.GI*; *Onimusha 2*; *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*; *Sam & Max*; *Shenmue II*; *Silent Hill 2*; *SOS Final Escape*; *Thief: The Dark Projec*



Beat 'em up: Games with the emphasis on raw combat; the challenge is defeating opponents while avoiding as much damage as possible. While most beat 'em ups are confined to 'arenas', **Edge** also takes into consideration scrolling beat 'em ups and titles that stress combat over other gameplay components.



Street Fighter II Turbo



The combo, the special move, the Vs cabinet: no game has shaped modern day fighters more than Capcom's '91 beat 'em up. Of course, the game's more than just an influence, the dozens of console conversions still hold up today as an accessible reference point to judge any fighting game by.

- Format: **Arcade, SNES**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1993**

Virtua Fighter 3tb



Overlooked and underrated, *Virtua Fighter 3tb*'s purity is its strength. It may not have the wealth of moves we've now become accustomed to, but the implementation of an effective dodge command and ground elevation make this into one of the greatest strategical beat 'em ups ever made.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **AM2**
- Release: **1999**

Capcom vs SNK 2: Millionaire Fighting 2001



Bringing the two 2D superpowers together again, this time with all the options and characters anyone could possibly require, was like some kind of fighting fantasy. And though the sprites looked worn next to *Guilty Gear*, it didn't matter; the game played as fresh as Ryu's first fireball.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2001**

Rocky



The only game to have interrupted **Edge**'s lunchtime *Halo* sessions has to be something special. Spot-on collision detection, crunching sound samples and glorious effects conspire to deliver a twoplayer game that'll have you wincing. This is the most brutal beat 'em up ever made.

- Format: **PS2, GC, Xbox**
- Publisher: **Rage**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Viewtiful Joe



A kick, punch you will all remember. Few games deliver as powerful a sensation of impact as when time slows and the camera zooms and each of Joe's impossibly meaty legs detonates against a fragile skull. 'Viewtiful' may not be a word, but you know it when you feel it.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2003**

Street Fighter Alpha 3



The third instalment of Capcom's reinvention of Ken, Ryu, and friends depends entirely on reaction and instinct. As wide as it is deep, Crawfish's handheld conversion confirmed the game's merits. Some cite the Saturn version of *Alpha 2* as a tighter experience, but this remains **Edge**'s favourite.

- Format: **Game Boy Advance**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **Crawfish**
- Release: **1998**

Marvel vs. Capcom 2: New Age of Heroes



Although it shifts the emphasis from the precise rhythms of the *Street Fighter* series towards a histrionic visual style and bombastic Hyper Combos, this retains Capcom's judicious sense of balance and features a comprehensive selection of some of Capcom's best beat 'em up characters.

- Format: **Arcade, DC**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**

Dead or Alive 3



Not popular in the eyes of the coin-op cognoscenti, *DoA3* is nevertheless the apogee of a series that, like *Soul Calibur*, combines accessibility with complexity. Stunning graphics and multi-tiered combat environments are cosmetic touches, but it's the interplay of different fighting styles that impresses.

- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**
- Developer: **Tecmo (Team Ninja)**
- Release: **2002**

Soul Calibur II



The original title probably represented a superior technical achievement, but *Soul Calibur II* is the better game, featuring a similarly densely-packed singleplayer game and a more finely balanced multiplayer game, which requires a tactical approach rather then rote-learned combos.

- Format: **GC, Xbox, PS2, Arcade**
- Publisher: **Namco**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Virtua Fighter Evolution



While it has visual imperfections, the latest in the *Virtua Fighter* series is technically excellent. So balanced, so dynamic; the moves combine to deliver overwhelming combinations, but not the kind of tortured strings as in *Tekken*. It requires patience, practice and skill to become a true master.

- Format: **Arcade, PS2**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **AM2**
- Release: **2003**

■ Finalists: *Guilty Gear X*; *IK+*; *PowerStone 2*; *Project Justice*; *Virtua Fighter 2*



Platform: It's not just about timing jumps across chasms; platform games demand that players explore, negotiate and then conquer environments, whether they be on the sea, in the air or in lava-filled volcanoes. It doesn't matter whether you're controlling a ball or a man with a jet-pack, platform games share the same values.



Marble Madness

It's almost unplayable, of course. Whatever the joys of MAME, nothing transfers so poorly to a clattery office keyboard. But still it pulls you back with the thick solidity of its amazing colours, the sinister groove of the music, and each level's judicious dose of ingenuity, humour and rank, utter cruelty.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Atari**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1985**



Pilotwings

A beautifully balanced, delightfully different game that remains as playable and uniquely rewarding as the day it was released. It was, even 13 years ago, a particularly brave project which now serves as a reminder to publishers (those able to think beyond commercial levels) of the potential of videogaming.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1990**



Yoshi's Island: Super Mario World 2

Arriving in the SNES' latter years, this *Super Mario World* sequel missed a lot of gamers. Like *Pilotwings* before it, it makes use of Super FX technology as a way of including ingenious gameplay touches while delivering one of Nintendo's best platforming experiences to date.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1995**

Super Mario 64

A playworld full of possibilities, *Super Mario 64* is still the shining example of sandbox design. There's never a moment when a star is not obtainable, and there are plenty of sights and sounds to distract you along the way. That it still betters every other platform game on the market says everything.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1996**



Jet Set Radio Future

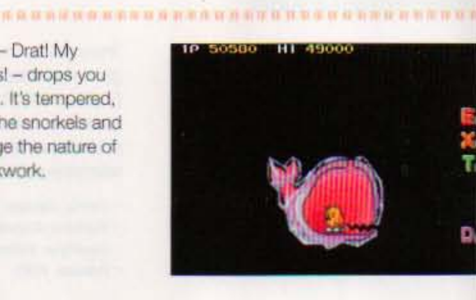
Having dispensed with the time constraints imposed in the Dreamcast original, the neon-urban architecture featured in *Jet Set Radio Future* offers unbridled platforming joy, due to its dizzying vertical scope and intricate use of space, and does so with its own confidently independent sense of style.

- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Smilebit**
- Release: **2002**

The New Zealand Story

The magnificently irresistible set-up – Drat! My friends have been stolen by a walrus! – drops you into a world of painstaking precision. It's tempered, though, by the delightful parade of the snorkels and spaceships and swans which change the nature of the game as regular as crazed clockwork.

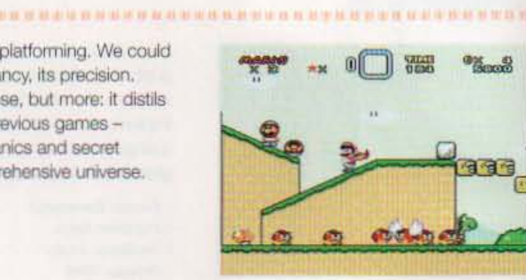
- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Taito**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1988**



Super Mario World

It still remains the apex of 2D platforming. We could mention its character, its vibrancy, its precision. *Super Mario World* has all these, but more: it distils the best elements from the previous games – namely the clever play mechanics and secret locations – into a more comprehensive universe.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1991**



NiGHTS: Into Dreams

Trademark Sonic Team though sadly not as popular as the hedgehog creation that preceded (and has outlived) it by a few years, *NiGHTS* offers a wonderfully distinct experience, with a central game mechanic that highlights the tragic restrictions imposed on the majority of today's videogames.

- Format: **Saturn**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sonic Team**
- Release: **1996**



Super Monkey Ball

A monkey, a ball, a goal, a maze, a single-stick control system and hours of your life wasted watching him fall, fall, and fall again. *SMB*'s elegant simplicity is also its greatest asset. When you fail you have no one to blame but yourself; when you succeed, the relief translates into elation.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sega (Amusement Vision)**
- Release: **2001**



Super Mario Sunshine

Edge knows it wasn't as polished as the previous outing. It had bugs, repetition and those damned invisible walls. But *Sunshine* remains a piece of platforming excellence, full of tropical joy and watery splendour, and the disappointment it induces only comes because of the game it had to follow.

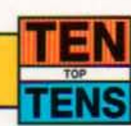
- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**



■ Finalists: *Ape Escape*; *Crash Bandicoot*; *Jak and Daxter*; *Prince of Persia*; *Sonic Adventure*; *Sonic The Hedgehog*; *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*; *Super Mario Bros 3*



Puzzle: Games that test the brain matter, but do so in a more confined play arena than strategy titles. Puzzle games also tend to test your reflexes and levels of concentration as much as your intelligence. This simultaneous focus on visual-spatial ability and quick fingers make puzzle games unique.



Ms Pac-Man



While **Edge** would normally have gone for Namco's original, recent years have seen a growing attraction towards Midway's 'homage'. Its (slightly) higher number of mazes and other specific personal touches help reduce the predictable nature of its male-fronted predecessor. Close call though.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Midway**
- Developer: **GCC/Midway**
- Release: **1981**

Tetris



The most compulsive of all puzzle games? Certainly one of the most popular. *Tetris'* 'one more go' grasp on players is unique even within the naturally alluring world of videogames. Its beautifully economic design belies the remarkable ingenuity behind an uncommonly, acutely realised concept.

- Format: **Various**
- Publisher: **Various**
- Developer: **Alexey Pajitnov**
- Release: **1985**

Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine



It's like *Tetris*, but you have to think vertically instead of horizontally, in order to set up death-defying combos, against an increasingly punishing downward speed. It's impossible to choose a definitive version of *Puyo Puyo*, because they're all magnificent, but at least *Dr Robotnik's* features a recognisable cast.

- Format: **Mega Drive**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1993**

Devil Dice



One of those games that shamefully few ever notice, *Devil Dice* (*Xi* in Japan) is a gem whose commercial performance, like so many here, is entirely at odds with the quality of the experience offered. A crime given that it features one of the most thrilling twoplayer coop modes around.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **SCEE**
- Developer: **SCEI**
- Release: **1998**

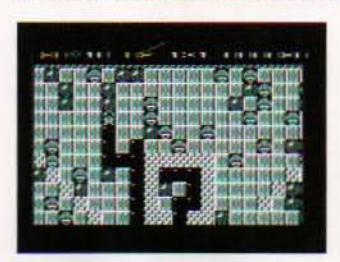
Mr Driller Drill Land



The bubble-gum visuals and cutesy music disguise a complex and addictive number of puzzle games. While original *Mr Driller* variants are available the themed quests, including Drindy Adventure and The Hole of Druaga add variety to the classic *Mr Driller* formula. Once you pop, you can't stop.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Namco**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Boulderdash 2: Rockford's Revenge



One of the greatest exponents of cause and effect gameplay, *Boulderdash 2* does everything the original did but adds even more fiendish conundrums. Collecting all the diamonds is one thing, but there's so many routes and shortcuts that getting the best score will simply boggle your mind.

- Format: **Commodore 64**
- Publisher: **First Star Software**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1985**

Rampart



You should buy an Atari Lynx just to play this (it's bound to be cheaper and more convenient than the coin-op). Seemingly harmless, *Rampart* is the type of game that worms itself into your hands and then spends the next few hours pretending they're minutes. Turn-based multiplayer in its finest form.

- Format: **Arcade, Lynx**
- Publisher: **Atari**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1990**

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo



And boy do you puzzle, and boy do you fight. Undoubtedly the most vicious of the head-to-head gem-busters, the potential for strategic planning and last-minute reversals means that bouts evolve into something truly epic rather than blandly repetitive.

- Format: **Saturn**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1996**

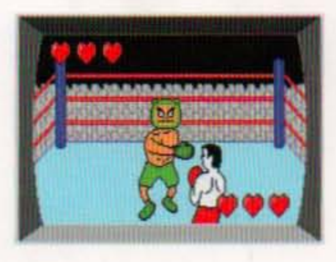
Bangai-o



It's ostensibly a shooter, but *Bangai-o's* puzzling credentials are clear. There's the thrilling power-up process in which your firepower increases in proportion to your proximity to enemies, and levels that are spatial conundrums, to be unlocked by taking the correct route, using appropriate ammo.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Swing!**
- Developer: **Treasure**
- Release: **2001**

Wario Ware, Inc



You'll never get those first five minutes back again. That delicious, narcotic freefall while your brain sprinted in a desperate attempt to try to catch up with your thumbs. And once you know the game inside out you'll still love it, because it loves games as much as you do.

- Format: **Game Boy Advance**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2003**

Finalists: *Blast Corps*; *Bomb Jack*; *Chu Chu Rocket*; *Deflector*; *Denki Blocks*; *Fantavision*; *Super Bomberman*; *Qix*



Racing: Left, right and accelerate. Although most racing games use similarly styled mechanics, handling, visuals and responsivity have evolved massively over the years. Whether you're piloting a kart, a plane or a flying elephant, the winning condition of a racer is that you beat either a clock or a rival in the quickest time possible.



OutRun

Edge has yet to meet someone who doesn't like *OutRun*. Even those who dislike racing games appear to succumb to its charm. Simplistic by today's standards, certainly, but it retains an incredibly rewarding dynamic and a structure so perfect you wonder why it's not copied more often.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sega-AM2**
- Release: **1986**



Super Mario Kart

Mario Kart is the embodiment of Nintendo's multilayered appeal. On the one hand, it's a casually enjoyable party game; on the other it's one of the most demanding racing games ever, requiring concentration, dexterity and quick reactions, to shave seconds from your best lap times.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1992**



Colin McRae Rally 2.0

There wasn't much to separate this from the third iteration, but *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* just wins due to a more cogent game structure and greater handling feedback. **Edge** has always been a fan of the series and only hopes that the fourth game (due for review next issue) will prove to be the best so far.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **Codemasters**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**

Gran Turismo 3 A-spec

Yes, the AI is rubbish. Always has been. You've missed the point, though: *Gran Turismo* games are about you, your car and the track. It's all about exploring the limits of your machine and continually pushing the boundaries of your driving ability, nothing else. And *GT3* does that beautifully.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **SCEE**
- Developer: **Polyphony Digital**
- Release: **2001**

MotoGP 2: URT

Easily the best two-wheel racing game ever made, but *MotoGP 2*'s inclusion here is not just for variety, it oozes class and shows a technical mastery over the Xbox which is second to none. The handling is elevated by cleverly allowing your rider to lean, and over Xbox Live it has no peer.

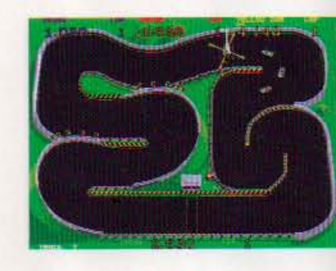
- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **THQ**
- Developer: **Climax**
- Release: **2003**



Super Sprint

Very few other racing titles have managed to encapsulate the light-hearted multiplayer exuberance of *Super Sprint*, and consequently, not many are quite as much fun. If ever there was an argument against the inexorable drive towards realism, surely this is it.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Atari**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1986**



Grand Prix Legends

Frighteningly realistic, *GP Legends* punishes all those that fail to take it seriously. Yet, for those prepared to meet the required ludicrous levels of dedication and concentration, it rewards in equal measure. Besides, the Ferrari V12 GPL has the best sounding engine of any racing game. Ever.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Sierra**
- Developer: **Papyrus**
- Release: **1998**



Excitebike 64

A little angular these days but other than graphically, *Excitebike 64* has suffered no other deterioration. To date no other game has captured the dynamic of a motorcross bike so adequately. It's the *Wave Race* of the bike world, with challenging, imaginative tracks and some of the best minigames yet seen.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **Left Field**
- Release: **2000**



Burnout 2: Point of Impact

The polar opposite of *Gran Turismo*, *Burnout 2* forgoes tuning and tweaking and replaces it with brilliant seat-of-the-pants racing. The design encourages you to increase boost by narrowly missing vehicles, adding to the tension. And Crash mode? It's kept **Edge** up late on many occasions.

- Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
- Publisher: **Acclaim**
- Developer: **Criterion**
- Release: **2002**



F-Zero GX

Time has not been kind to *F-Zero* or *F-Zero X*, yet the latest incarnation takes the personality of the original and updates the courses of the sequel with imaginative, not to mention hazardous, tracks. It'll make you scream and it'll make you eyes bulge. But mostly, it'll keep you coming back for more.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **Sega (Amusement Vision)**
- Release: **2003**



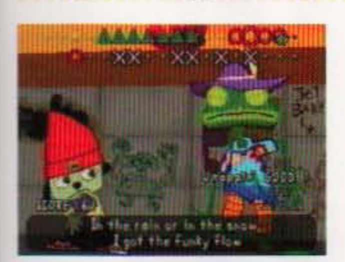
■ Finalists: *Daytona USA*; *Grand Prix 2*; *Le Mans 24 Hours* (DC); *The Need for Speed* (3DO); *Sega Rally Championship*; *TOCA World Touring Cars*; *Wave Race 64*



Rhythm action: Kick, punch, it's all in the mind. And in your bones if you're a true devotee of the form. The rhythm action title distinguishes itself by asking players to time their inputs to the beats and rhythms of music – often at startlingly quick speeds. Dance variations of the form also appeal to the kinaesthetically gifted.



PaRappa the Rapper



"Kick, punch, it's all in the mind," rhymed Chop Chop Master Onion, and PlayStation owners across the globe broke into a smile. Like *Space Channel 5* it's often accused of style over substance, but if the purpose of videogaming is to entertain, then there's no question that *PaRappa* is a triumph.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **SCEJ**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1996**

Vib Ribbon



A game that lets you bring your whole CD collection literally into play. A tutorial so finely presented that **Edge** still watches it every single time it plays. And a character with more grace and personality in her few lines than most games stretch over a thousand polygons.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **SCEE,**
- Developer: **NanaOn-Sha**
- Release: **1999**

Samba de Amigo



In contrast to the dexterity required of *Dance Dance Revolution*, or the precision demanded by the likes of *Gitaroo Man* or *Frequency*, even the most cack-handed malcoordinate can derive delight from shaking Sega's maracas – which is perhaps why *Samba* is such a perennial party pleasure.

- Format: **DC, Arcade**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sonic Team**
- Release: **2000**

Frequency



Frequency is a clear demonstration that it's not just the Japanese who can do rhythm action. And despite being a game that could sit next to puzzle games or shoot 'em ups without looking out of place, it's also a title that does more than any other to present an intersection of action and rhythm.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **SCEE**
- Developer: **SCEA**
- Release: **2002**

Dance Dance Revolution Max 2



Responsible for bringing a new demographic to gaming, *DDR* is exactly what its name suggests, and *DDR MAX 2* is the ultimate version of the series. In it, Konami takes everything from previous iterations and adds the freeze arrow, which forces even veteran dancers to rethink their strategies.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **Konami**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2003**

Space Channel 5



The Morolians didn't need to force **Edge** to dance. Success is utterly dependent on grooving while you play, those who sit still soon pay the price. No game has ever combined so much pink and orange and funk and tapioca, and few have made their players feel so happy, zappy and sassy.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1999**

Cool Cool Toon



If SNK made a rhythm-action game, so the theory went, it would be beautifully crafted, intelligently designed, and only for the elite to savour. So they did, and so it was; *Cool Cool Toon* only ever appeared in Japan, but anyone who's sampled an import copy will know it's a magical experience.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **SNK**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**

Gitaroo Man



It's called 'The Legendary Song', and rightly, because it accompanies what amounts to the most emotional boss battle ever designed. If you've played it, you're singing it now. The game may require uncommon levels of precision and fluidity, but it rewards you by winning your heart forever.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **Koei**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2001**

Mad Maestro



Still the only game to use the DualShock 2's face button sensitivity for anything really interesting, *Mad Maestro*'s pressure-based gameplay suited its subject matter – conducting classical music – down to the ground. Myriad minigames and a true sense of involvement made it more than just a curio.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **SCEJ**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Amplitude



When the beats are coming and your fingers are tapping, you cannot look away for one second. As visually stunning as it is compulsive, Harmonix's sequel to *Frequency* proves just as addictive, and slightly more accessible. It's also undoubtedly the most intense experience rhythm action has to offer.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **SCEA**
- Developer: **Harmonix**
- Release: **2003**

■ Finalists: *Beatmania; Bust a Groove; Pop 'n Music; Space Channel 5 Part 2*



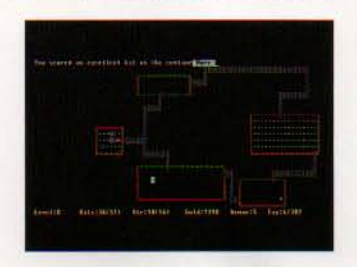
RPGs: Although many games now incorporate RPG elements, the main factor defining an RPG is the combination of character/inventory evolution, a quest-based narrative, and an element of NPC interaction. For this reason RPGs often exact a huge emotional pull on players.



Rogue

Lest this be mistaken as a sop to nostalgia, it's worth pointing out that the ASCII graphics of *Rogue* might have dated, but its addictive nature and playability remain undiminished – and uneclipsed by imitators such as *Diablo*. With its random dungeons, this is the definitive desert island videogame.

- Format: **BSD 4.2 UNIX**
- Publisher: **n/a**
- Developer: **Ken Arnold and Michael Toy**
- Release: **1980**



Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss

This thoroughly involving RPG has it all: a cracking plot, superb scenarios and problems that require both exploration and inspiration. Viewed from a realtime firstperson perspective, even before *Doom*, it involved the player to an unprecedented degree. And not many games let you translate Lizard language.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Origin**
- Developer: **Blue Sky Productions**
- Release: **1992**



Chrono Trigger

It put you on trial for rudeness, obliged you to race jet bikes across the scarred earth of a future dystopia and made **Edge** cry at robots. No matter where you go in time or space, *Chrono Trigger*'s designers have been there before you, stockpiling surprises and delights.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Square**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1995**



Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn

Perhaps the most comprehensive RPG ever, it's debatable whether any other title can match the scope of BioWare's achievement; an evolving narrative, a multitude of sub-quests, a rich cast of NPCs and amazing geographic diversity create a sense of immersion in the unfolding of an epic tale.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Interplay**
- Developer: **BioWare**
- Release: **2000**



Neverwinter Nights

Yes, there's the Aurora Toolset, and the boundless scope for adventure, and yes there's the ability to DM games on the fly, recreating the camaraderie and emergent adventure of pen-and-paper RPGs. But most significantly, *Neverwinter Nights* consists of an epic adventure that can vie with any other.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Atari**
- Developer: **BioWare**
- Release: **2002**

Dungeon Master

When other RPGs were trotting out the same old turn-based, stat-heavy combat and overhead views, FTL delivered a scintillating dungeon crawl. The thorny puzzles are still peerless, while the dank atmosphere generated by those cracked walls and bitmapped monsters live on in the minds of many.

- Format: **ST, Amiga**
- Publisher: **Activision**
- Developer: **FTL**
- Release: **1987**



Secret of Mana

Ten years ago, a lonely **Edge** often found it difficult to convince strangers to come back to its cartridge-infested flat after offering them the seemingly irresistible prospect of some threeplayer action courtesy of one of Square's most sublimely crafted roleplaying adventures. Bah, their loss.

- Format: **SNES**
- Publisher: **Square**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1993**



Planescape: Torment

With its tattooed amnesiac hero and deconstructed narrative, *Torment* is arguably the most sophisticated example of storytelling within a videogame, yet it also incorporates the sort of multiple solution problems, optional sidequests and ambitious quest structure that any self-respecting RPG ought to aspire to.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Interplay**
- Developer: **Black Isle**
- Release: **1999**



Phantasy Star Online

It's not about the single player, although **Edge** dedicated many, many solo hours to it. It's about the generosity and wonder that the beauty of Ragol conjured out of its visitors. It was an unlucky hunter who returned home without tales of the victories and defeats that turned strangers into friends.

- Format: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**



Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire

The gentle plink-plink as your pokéball closes over a coveted creature still silences you. Holding your breath as it rocks back and fore you try not to jinx it by celebrating too soon. If every thousand-mile RPG starts with a single step, then catching them all still begins with that heart-stopping first.

- Format: **Game Boy Advance**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **Game Freak**
- Release: **2003**



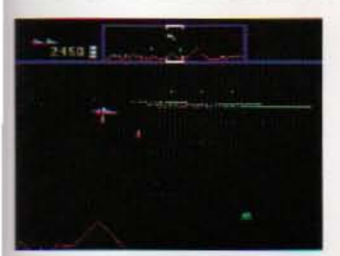
Finalists: *Breath of Fire II; Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday; EarthBound; EverQuest; Fallout 2; Final Fantasy VI; Final Fantasy VII; Panzer Dragoon Saga; Shenmue; Skies of Arcadia; System Shock 2; Ultima VII; Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*



Shooters: Although the visual cues may differ somewhat, both 3D and 2D shooters challenge the player to quickly acquire targets, aim and then shoot with deadly precision. Good reflexes are essential, as is the ability to think quickly and interpret pattern and wave formations.



Defender



If ever a game required a fusion between man and machine it's *Defender*. There are no patterns, it's all about using the space to prove your reflexes. Lily-livered modern gamers might blanch at the five button input, but its responsivity and sound design still offer an addictive challenge to the skilled.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Williams**
- Developer: **Eugene Jarvis**
- Release: **1980**

1942



Edge's relationship to Capcom's classic endures. It consumed hours of one holiday and has provided notable moments of elation at industry bashes. Play it via MAME and its pared down addictive charms are apparent. Some of the cutest SFX accompany one of the purest shooters ever constructed.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Capcom**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1984**

GoldenEye



Don't tell anyone, but no one expected this to be good. Early videos looked decidedly ropey, there was no marketing behind it (Rare had to come down to show the game itself), and, of course, it was a film licence. And it turned out to be the only other game that should have scored 10/10. Oops.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **Rare**
- Release: **1997**

Tempest 3000



Tricky to get hold of but more than worth the effort, *T3K* is a phenomenal shooter – an utterly absorbing trip into a world of hypnotic psychedelia and enveloping music, a world in which success ultimately depends solely on your brain's processing ability and the speed of your reflexes. Pure gaming.

- Format: **Nuon**
- Publisher: **Hasbro Interactive**
- Developer: **Jeff Minter**
- Release: **2001**

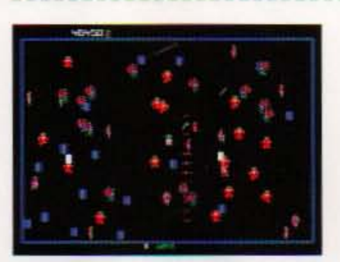
Rez



It's not about synaesthesia or name-checking Kandinsky. It's about the perfect balance between destruction and creation as broken bodies spiral sadly out of sight and sheets of luminous beauty blossom in their place. Some days, **Edge** wishes it were still trapped in the machine.

- Format: **PlayStation2, Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **UGA**
- Release: **2001**

Robotron 2084



Edge's favourite exponent of the twitch gaming ethic is Eugene Jarvis' twin-stick machine. The inspiration behind so much – not least PomPom's excellent *Mutant Storm* – *Robotron 2084* is so simple, so varied, so fast, and so, so cruel. If the future really is like this, **Edge** will be happy.

- Format: **Arcade**
- Publisher: **Williams**
- Developer: **Eugene Jarvis**
- Release: **1982**

Gunstar Heroes



In spite of that aberrant review in **Edge**'s inaugural issue, *Gunstar Heroes* is one of the magazine's most cherished titles. Today it stands as possibly the best side-scrolling shooter, with the neatly differentiated abilities of its two playable characters complementing magnificent set-piece design.

- Format: **Mega Drive**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Treasure**
- Release: **1993**

Giga Wing



Like the best 2D shoot 'em ups, *Giga Wing* combines a straightforward, if tautly polished approach to level structure and boss design, with the neat schtick of a rechargeable shield to add tactical complexity and, consequently, delight.

- Format: **Dreamcast, Arcade**
- Publisher: **Virgin Interactive Entertainment**
- Developer: **Capcom**
- Release: **1999**

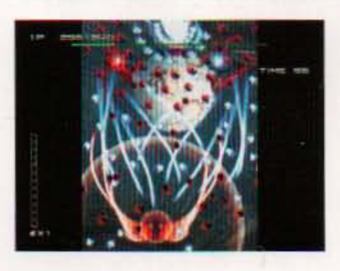
Halo: Combat Evolved



So, now do you believe **Edge**? The magazine might have a chip on its shoulder about Halo, given the accusations that flew around at the time of **E**105's 'perfect' ten. But it's big enough to let it go, because *Halo* was the biggest surprise **Edge** has had in a decade, and certainly the most pleasant.

- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **Microsoft**
- Developer: **Bungie**
- Release: **2001**

Ikaruga



Insanely difficult to beat by just using 'traditional' blasting methods, *Ikaruga* comes into its own when you attempt to chain for those glorious hi-scores. Its risk/reward structure has been finely honed so you never tire of replaying levels again. It could be a long time before this game is superseded.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Atari**
- Developer: **Treasure**
- Release: **2002**

Finalists: *Gauntlet II*; *Gradius III & IV*; *Metal Slug 3*; *Panzer Dragoon Orta*; *Radiant Silvergun*; *R-Type*; *Serious Sam*; *Sin & Punishment*; *Space Harrier*; *Super Pang*; *Thunderforce V*; *TimeSplitters2*; *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*



Sports: Representations of real-world sports, such as snooker, football and tennis are obvious. But this category also includes extreme sports, more leisurely pursuits (such as *DoA Extreme Beach Volleyball*) and futuristic sports, such as *Speedball*. The only exception to this is rally titles, which fit more firmly in the racing genre.



Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

Futuristic sports usually fall down because of poorly realised rule systems and over complex controls. *Speedball 2* kept things simple but still managed to portray an alien game with brutal efficiency. It had charm too, from the exquisite character animations to the cries of 'ice cream' it utterly drew you in.

- Format: **Amiga**
- Publisher: **Renegade**
- Developer: **The Bitmap Bros**
- Release: **1988**



Sega Bass Fishing

It was through *Sega Bass Fishing* that **Edge** finally understood the attraction of the sport – the thought of catching something bigger and better next time around proves a powerful lure. But at least in *SBF* you know another fish is always almost a certainty… it's one of **Edge**'s favourite party games.

- Format: **Arcade, DC**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1999**



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

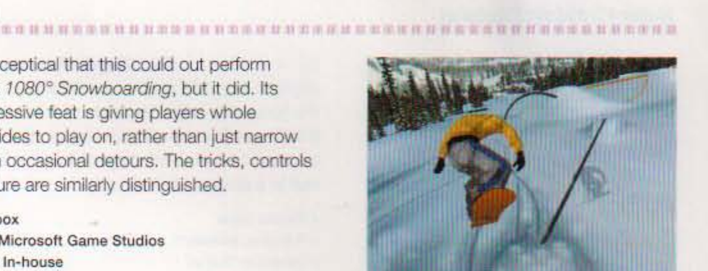
It's difficult to point to the definitive version of the *Tony Hawk's* series, but the third remains true to origins while fixing control and visual issues with previous outings. To assess its importance, not to mention its excellence, one only needs to see how many inferior extreme sports titles it's spawned.

- Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
- Publisher: **Activision**
- Developer: **Neversoft**
- Release: **2001**

Amped

We were sceptical that this could out perform Nintendo's *1080° Snowboarding*, but it did. Its most impressive feat is giving players whole mountainsides to play on, rather than just narrow tracks with occasional detours. The tricks, controls and structure are similarly distinguished.

- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2001**



Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Another title that prompted debates about genres, the 'sports' component alone is competent enough, but it's the non-goal-oriented, involving, leisure play and social interaction that surround it which really stands out – for chipping away at established notions of gameplay as much as for just sheer fun.

- Format: **Xbox**
- Publisher: **Tecmo**
- Developer: **In-house (Team Ninja)**
- Release: **2003**

International Track & Field

Not since bettered, *IT&F* has over the years been responsible for playing host to some of the most intense, competitive bouts of gaming between members of the editorial team. Some play it safe and do the minimum, others continually strive to push the boundaries of virtual athletic prowess…

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **Konami**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1996**



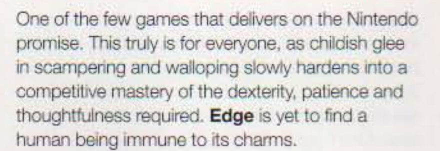


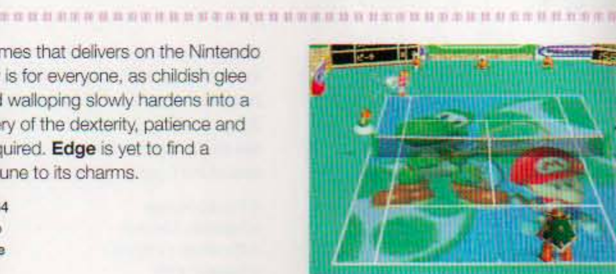


Mario Tennis

One of the few games that delivers on the Nintendo promise. This truly is for everyone, as childish glee in scampering and walloping slowly hardens into a competitive mastery of the dexterity, patience and thoughtfulness required. **Edge** is yet to find a human being immune to its charms.

- Format: **Nintendo 64**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2000**

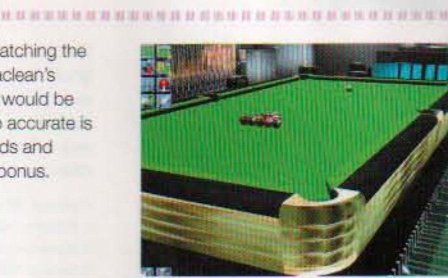




Jimmy White's Cueball World

No snooker game has come close to matching the ball behaviour and physics of Archer Maclean's masterpiece. Those taking up the sport would be advised to use this as a learning tool, so accurate is the simulation. The fact that darts, billiards and several pool variants are thrown in, is a bonus.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Virgin Interactive**
- Developer: **Awesome Developments**
- Release: **2001**



Madden NFL 2003

The jury is still out on whether this iteration loses some of the tactical depth so evident in the mid-'90s versions but in terms of delivering the most playable, enthralling, and comprehensive American football experience, the series' advancements in both AI and graphical power play a crucial role.

- Format: **PS2, Xbox**
- Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**



Winning Eleven 7

Edge is still discovering things in *WE* it's never seen before after hundreds of hours of 90 minutes. And while **Edge** doesn't get the opportunity to indulge as much as it would like, the number of magazines where it's been a permanent post-work fixture since launch attests to its durability. The latest is the best.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **Konami**
- Developer: **In-house (KCET)**
- Release: **2003**



Finalists: *Everybody's Golf*; *NHL 2002*; *Super Punch Out!!*; *Virtua Tennis*



Strategy: Although the RTS has come to dominate the strategy field of late, God sims, war simulations and management titles all expect a similar level of cerebral input from the player. The use of quick reflexes is not exempt from this category, but the route to success usually requires planning and a calculated approach.



Elite



Yes, combat is integral, but *Elite*'s real pull, and the factor that made BBC gamers the smuggest kids in school, was the emphasis on trade. It still remains the most brilliant example of open-ended game design and is not just here for reasons of nostalgia. No other space trading game has come close.

- Format: **BBC Micro**
- Publisher: **Acornsoft**
- Developer: **David Braben, Ian Bell**
- Release: **1984**

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness



Of the two franchises that dominated the initial surge of interest in the embryonic RTS, *Command & Conquer* might have more sequels, but *Warcraft II* remains, to this day, the best example of the form. Uncomplicated, it boasts a delicately escalating balance of unit power and some ingenious maps.

- Format: **PC, Mac**
- Publisher: **Blizzard Entertainment**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1995**

Final Fantasy Tactics



It may contain Square's trademark super-deformed characters, but don't be deceived: this is about as hardcore as strategy gets. Blending head-hurting, turn-based combat with RPG levelling up better than any other game in its class, *FF Tactics* demands Kasporov-like concentration and dedication.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **Squaresoft**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1998**

Panzer Front bis



The original game was significantly enhanced for the sequel to include player designed scenarios and maps. Understanding terrain type and elevation is crucial while plotting your strategy takes great care and experience. There's nothing quite like taking out a Tiger while hiding behind a hedgerow.

- Format: **PSone**
- Publisher: **Agetec**
- Developer: **Enterbrain**
- Release: **2001**

Advance Wars



Nintendo does chess. That's all this needs to say, really, because beyond that it needs you to testify. Plenty will; even if the idea of turn-based strategy is abhorrent to you, *Advance Wars* pushes its strategic hook into your brain from the start of the first tutorial, and never, ever lets go.

- Format: **Game Boy Advance**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Sim City 2000



Yet another title that has yet to be eclipsed by later sequels or imitators, Maxis' exquisite city strategy title is mentally taxing and admirably confrontation-free, presenting players with the ultimate urban sandbox in which to play, and an infinite variety of possibility.

- Format: **PC, Mac**
- Publisher: **Maxis**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1994**

Civilization II



Although *Civilization III* introduced some considered additions to the formula, *Civ II* presents the more composed challenge, and is still capable of absorbing days and weeks thanks to its progressive structure and enormous scale. Accessible, but intellectually rigorous, this is the acme of strategy gaming.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **MicroProse**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **1996**

Animal Crossing



Is it possible to formulate a strategy for a game that can't be won? In *Animal Crossing*, the more elaborate the plan, the more pleasing the result. Whether creating portraits pixel by pixel or collecting furniture through a whole calendar year, planning and perseverance pay delightful dividends.

- Format: **GameCube**
- Publisher: **Nintendo**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2001**

Operation Flashpoint



Other games may have carved out the niche sub-genre of the soldier-sim, but *Operation Flashpoint* made it its own. Rolling vistas and expansive loneliness created an unparalleled atmosphere, while the realism forged genuine fear as missions fell apart, and euphoria when they went to plan.

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **Codemasters**
- Developer: **Bohemia Interactive**
- Release: **2001**

Dynasty Tactics

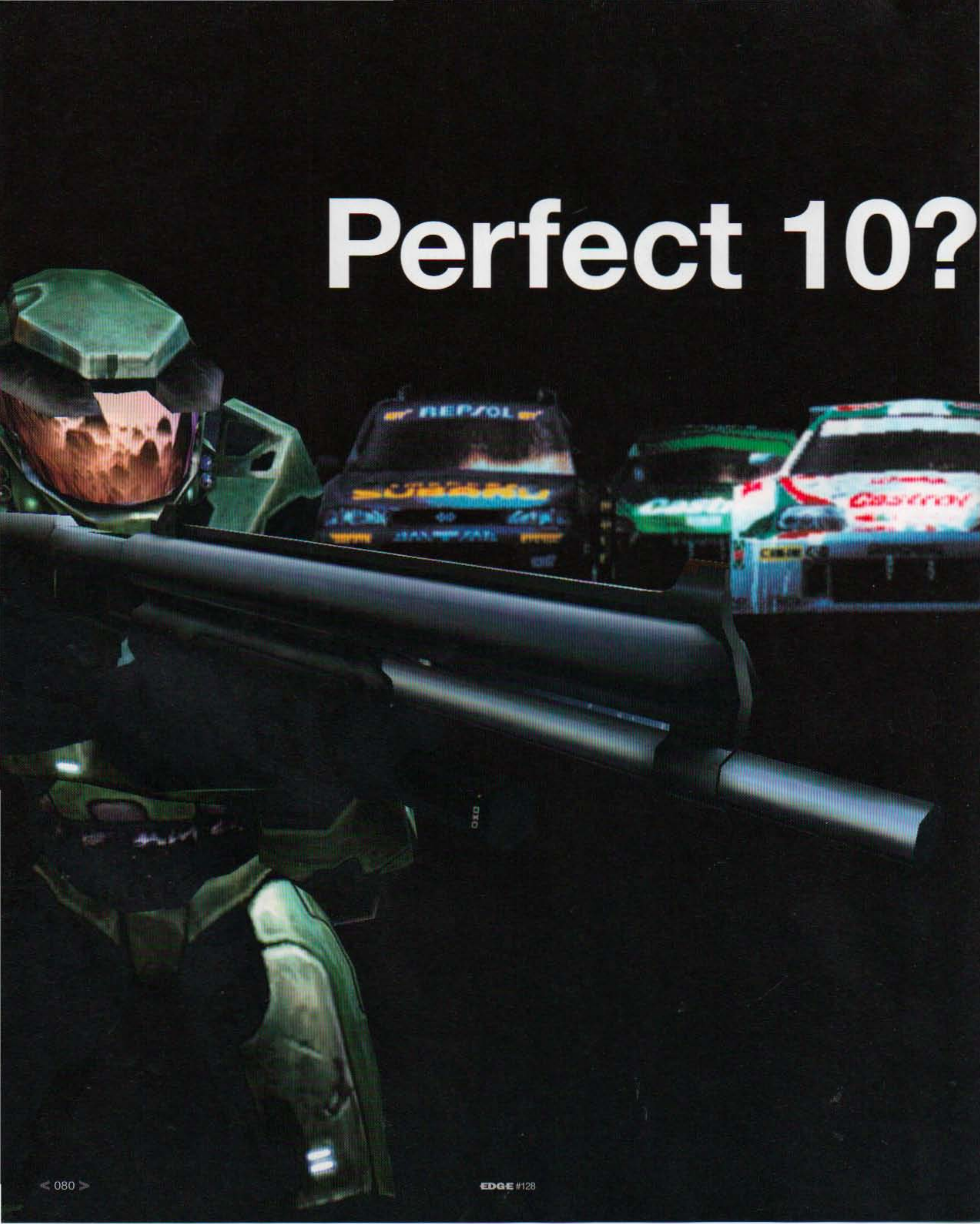


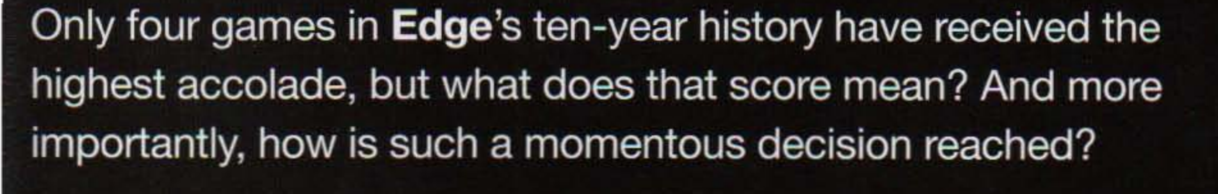
As a conventional example of the genre, *Dynasty Tactics* stands out because of its polish and presentation, and the way in which it traverses both battlefield tactics and overarching strategy. But its combo system also introduces a level of cerebral depth that can be matched by few other titles.

- Format: **PlayStation2**
- Publisher: **Koei**
- Developer: **In-house**
- Release: **2002**

Finalists: *Command & Conquer Tiberian Sun; Death Tanks; Lemmings; Pikmin; Populous; Premier Manager 2; Ring of Red; StarCraft; Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis; Worms; X-Com Apocalypse*

Perfect 10?





Only four games in **Edge**'s ten-year history have received the highest accolade, but what does that score mean? And more importantly, how is such a momentous decision reached?

An **Edge** ten out of ten is something extraordinary; it's also horrible. It's horrible because the score is never given out lightly – it involves debate, days of playtesting, more debate and then a heated argument. Of course, the reviewer usually has the final say, the casting vote, but for such a monumental decision everyone gets involved. We just wanted to offer you a glimpse of the theory behind the process that occurs when something magnificent, such as *Super Mario 64*, first enters the games room.

Edge staffers have come and gone, but it's testament to the strength of the magazine's original remit – to comment upon new games and technology in a mature and illuminating manner – that the editorial stance has not weakened. In some respects the **Edge** rating system is the backbone of the magazine, it's a constant reminder of the philosophy that underpins the editorial. Considered progressive by some and harsh by others, the rating system has at least been a steadfast element over the magazine's ten-year lifespan.

Steve Jarratt, **Edge**'s founding editor, explains his reasoning behind the scoring. "After several years struggling with review scores, I knew that I really wanted to try and have 'five' as a proper benchmark average, with higher scores reflecting the quality titles." Think back to the burgeoning new consoles and

experimental delivery technologies and you'll realise why it took so long for **Edge**'s first ten to come along. "I didn't set out to make ten some sort of Holy Grail," he continues, "but few of the games we saw in those early days ever really seemed to warrant such an extreme, nigh-on perfect score (we were still in the thick of new CD-ROM titles, the Mega-CD and 3DO, remember). Also, I don't think I ever wanted us to be 'harsh'; rather just 'fair'. I was sick of seeing the 'seven as average' thing."

It took 35 issues and three full years before **Edge** awarded its first ten. Many readers (some of whom currently work on the magazine) never thought it would happen. *Super Mario 64* was revolutionary and few would argue that it deserved top marks. But that word – 'revolutionary' – has come to be a guiding principle for **Edge** down the years, but it's also been a controversial term.

As **Edge** is in a confessional mood we'll let you in on a secret: in the mists of time a chart used to adorn the **Edge** office, it was there to remind writers of what the review numbers signified. Two equals appalling; six equals competent; eight equals excellent, etc – roughly the same sentiments as you'll find in our Testscreen intro page every month. The only major difference was that ten did not equal revolutionary – it simply said 'Miyamoto'.

Gran Turismo changed all that. If anything, it's the ten that caused the most outrage (even more so than *Halo*), but it also provoked **Edge** to question its own criteria. While *Mario 64* ushered in a new age of 3D gaming, and did so with astonishing confidence, *Gran Turismo* was just another driving game. Or at least that's what the Sega zealots would have you believe.

Edge's four top-rated games are very different, and fall into varied genres, but they're linked by common gameplay values. First, the game in question must offer something markedly fresh from anything else on the market. This is where both *Gran Turismo* and *Halo* have been criticised. It's easy to pick apart those titles, to suggest that *Halo* isn't revolutionary because *Tribes* allowed the player to commandeer vehicles first, or *Gran Turismo* should have been a nine because it was possible to upgrade your vehicle in *Super Sprint*. This is missing the point.

A ten out of ten game also represents a cohesion of the best elements from other titles. It apprehends great gameplay components and takes them into previously unimaginable directions. *Gran Turismo*'s wealth of tuning options, fabulous visuals and precise, realism-influenced handling trumped anything in its day, while *Halo*'s blend of useable vehicles, combat and cascading AI remains the benchmark two years on from its release.

Second, these games give you the shivers. Perhaps not the most objective way to judge a game, but all gamers know it when it happens. That transcendent feeling when something so clever, powerful or imaginative strikes a chord in the heart and mind simultaneously. Some games might provoke momentary elation, but games such as *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* delivered revelatory moments from beginning to end.

One racing game, one platformer, one adventure game and one shooter. Viewed by any measure they are astonishing games, but they are also genre epiphanies and enduring examples of videogame excellence. It's not about perfection; all these games have or will be bettered in years to come. However, you can bet all the games in your software library that the titles they inspire would not be conceivable without their existence. That's what makes a ten out of ten game.

Perfect 10? What the top E score means to developers

We subscribe to **Edge** and read it regularly; its editorials are widely respected in North America. Looking over the games that have achieved a 10/10 rating in **Edge**, my reaction to each of them is that they're all very important milestones in the history of videogames and that their **Edge** scores have indeed stood the test of time in all four cases. However, I would actually add that there are many other, arguably equally important, games which didn't receive a 10/10 rating from **Edge**... but the fact that **Edge** has been so exclusive in handing out 10/10 ratings definitely does mean that any game in the future which receives a 10/10 should be a must-purchase for any videogame fan.
Ray Muzyka, CEO, BioWare

As a developer I think it's fair to say that the **Edge** review score is the one you always look out for. Despite **Edge**'s schoolboy crush on the Molyneux's and Hassibis's of the world, when it comes to reviewing **Edge** is impartial to the extreme... in fact sometimes you get the feeling some games are marked down just to prove a point to their competitors. When **Edge** does give a high score, of even a nine let alone the elusive ten, then you know a game is genuinely something special. While a high score in **Edge** doesn't really affect the sales of a game in the same way a comparable score in one of the official magazines does, **Edge**'s accolades command far more respect and prestige than most other mags who give 98 per cent scores to every other game that crosses their desks. Outside of job adverts and ex-Bullfrog coder fetishist wank material, the reviews section really is the main reason developers come back to **Edge** each month.
Nick Baynes, development director, Climax (Brighton)

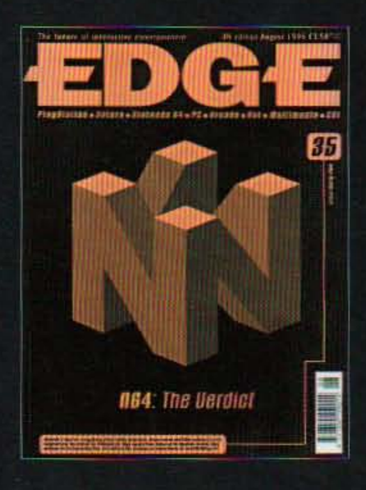
Every month for the last ten years, when **Edge** magazine comes into the office there'll be people talking about the scores for that month. Whether you agree or disagree with how **Edge** rates each game, people in development will always be so opinionated. I remember one of my employers saying, "Perhaps we should adapt our bonus policy around the score **Edge** gives our games..." Uhm, with comments like that, it makes you want to work for Treasure.
Chun Wah Kong, designer, SCEE

Give me one good reason for the need for a score in a game review? With current generation titles taking anything up to and sometimes beyond two years of blood, sweat, passion and even tears to create, and taking into account the massive variations in people's tastes, I just don't see how it is possible to distil such a thing into a black and white, finite, concrete, irreversible figure. Tagging a score on the end detracts from the review copy, and insults both the reader's intelligence and the immeasurable efforts of the development team involved. Did *Mario* et al deserve a perfect ten? Any developer will tell you that it is impossible to make a perfect game.
Ed Bartlett, business development director, The Bitmap Brothers

I admire the fact that **Edge** has not devalued its perfect score during its ten-year history. Any developer would be absolutely delighted to receive such a score, but on the other hand you know that the magazine is, quite rightly, very subjective so scores vary more than with the consumer press. Generally, I feel **Edge** hits the nail on the head with its appraisal of games. It's certainly one of the few magazines that appears not to kowtow to publisher pressure. But whether you agree with the scores on an individual, game-by-game basis or not, the fact remains that they provoke enormous discussion. For that reason, **Edge** scores are hugely significant.
Charles Cecil, managing director, Revolution Software

Getting a 10/10 review in **Edge** is clearly something to be aspired to as the small number of games that **Edge** has given this mark to have undoubtedly been flagship titles on the platforms, and I am sure could all still be enjoyed today. And yet, what these reviews never do, of course, is give a completely accurate reflection of the potential commercial success of any given title over another. Reviews are ultimately there to provide a subjective set of opinions on a given day by a single person towards the likely enjoyment of the individual game for the reader. No matter how well educated or versed in the subject matter the reviewer is, they will probably never get it completely right ten out of every ten times.
Glen O'Connell, head of UK PR, Electronic Arts

I can't think of anybody I know in the development industry who can't name at least three of the four 'perfect score' games, underlining the impact each of them had when they were awarded at the time. Some publishers insist that widespread massmarket consumer magazines are key and that **Edge** ratings are insignificant in their PR campaign. And although we have to admit that low review scores in **Edge** are less and less likely to break a big game's marketing budget these days, high scores in **Edge** and more specifically perfect scores can certainly still very much make a game. *Halo*'s ten undoubtedly contributed a great deal to convincing potential early adopters of the Xbox that the machine was catering for the hardcore. It provided Microsoft with much needed street cred and although their marketing budget would have seen them come out on top anyway, it certainly must have helped.
Martin de Ronde, commercial director, Guerrilla

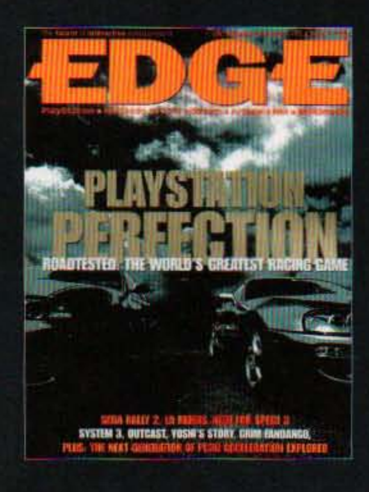






Super Mario 64
E35, August 1996

The Japanese import came in and was played solidly for an entire week. As **Edge**'s deputy editor of the time, **Tony Mott**, says by way of reflection, "If ever there was going to be a ten, then surely it was this." *Super Mario 64* has stood the test of time remarkably well. Even by any objective measure it remains one of the greatest platform games on any system – a staggering achievement for a game that has just celebrated its seventh birthday. It offers a playground full of wonderful challenges and minigames only marred by some frustrating camera angles in one of the later levels, like Tick Tock Clock. Ever since the game was released rumours have suggested that a Star Road level was cut out due to time pressures. This is supported by the fact that once Mario has collected all 120 stars, he can be shot on to the roof of the castle, collect 100 lives and a double-jump from Yoshi, but to no great effect. Still, you can always start a new game again.

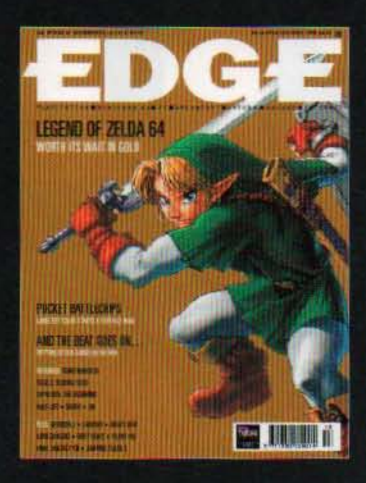






Gran Turismo
E55, February 1998

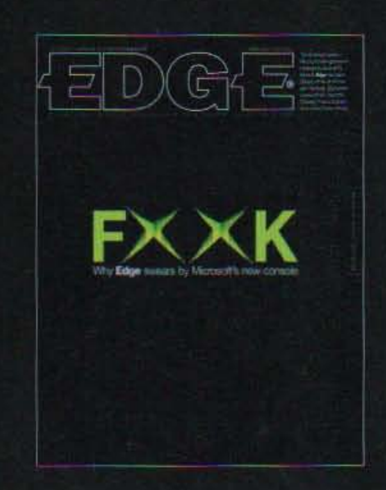
Don't think about how *Gran Turismo* compares to modern driving games, think about how it affected the genre five years ago. Back then the admittedly excellent *Rage Racer* offered four tracks and limited tuning options. Most non-sport specific racing games followed the Namco (or Sega) powersliding model slavishly. Polyphony's title comprehensively overhauled expectations, not just of what the genre could offer, but of what the PlayStation was capable. To put this into perspective, *Gran Turismo* offered more cars than the whole of the PlayStation's range of racing games in 1997 put together. But it wasn't just about statistics, the handling felt so authentic that it was possible to apply real racing technique in order to shave vital hundreds of seconds off lap times. Its legacy endures. While the series has evolved over subsequent iterations the game's upgrade, collect 'em all philosophy has now extended to a wide range of other videogame titles.





The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time
E66, Christmas 1998

Such was the secrecy surrounding the release of *Ocarina of Time* – a game, don't forget, that had been previewed for three years prior to its release (and the game that is likely to still hold the record for the most appearances within the pages of the magazine) – that **Edge** had to travel to NoA to play and review the game. Its quality was instantly evident. There are few who would question that this represents the pinnacle of the *Zelda* universe. Here Link's world is more complete, absorbing and imaginative than in other iterations. The playing of melodies on the ocarina is a magnificent touch – much more so than *Wind Waker*'s baton – and the overworld successfully integrates the dungeons and brilliantly realised lands together in a more effective manner. *Ocarina of Time* remains one of the finest examples of electronic entertainment ever made and **Edge** can't imagine a time when it will stop forming part of its all-time favourite videogames.





Halo: Combat Evolved
E105, Christmas 2001

Back in November 2001 an email was sent to the **Edge** team from the staff member charged with reviewing Microsoft's big FPS hope. The subject header was: "A definitive list of the things that are wrong with *Halo*." The email was blank. With hindsight it's easy to point out that *Halo* has weaknesses: repeating Covenant architecture and occasionally bland level structure, slowdown during the Warthog finale, a trashily pulp sci-fi plot and the Library. People hate the Library. But did *Halo* deserve an **Edge** ten out of ten? On this matter **Edge** has reason to be cheerful. *Halo* stands as a monumental landmark in videogaming. More importantly, it's still as fun and fresh nearly two years on and one of the few games the entire **Edge** team regularly revisits. Its influence is already clear in titles such as *Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter*, *Red Faction II* and *Killzone*. Regenerating shields and fewer weapon slots are now a staple component of most FPSs.

Edge's review policy

Every issue, **Edge** evaluates the best, most interesting, hyped, innovative or promising games on a scale of ten, where five naturally represents the middle value. **Edge**'s rating system is fair, progressive and balanced. An average game deserves an average mark – not, as many believe, seven out of ten. Scores broadly correspond to the following sentiments: zero: nothing, one: disastrous, two: appalling, three: severely flawed, four: disappointing, five: average, six: competent, seven: distinguished, eight: excellent, nine: astounding, ten: revolutionary.

Edge's most played

Ikaruga

(GameCube) Atari

Edge hearts the end of level 2 boss; oh, and the end of level 3 boss. Godammit. **Edge** loves *Ikaruga* through and through. See you on the hi-score chart.



The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

(GameCube) Nintendo

Sure, there are some less than inspired bouts of back-tracking, but the high seas are so beautiful you can almost feel the spume. And we love treasure maps.



Burnout 2: Point of Impact

(Xbox) Acclaim

Constant powersliding around corners at speed is thrilling, doing it while boosting is suicidal yet alluring. The online hi-score chart just keeps us coming back.



Vib Ribbon

(PSone) SCEE

It may feel a little like wife-swapping, but Nana-on Sha's spindly rabbit and the *Vice City* soundtrack are a marriage made in **Edge**'s personal vision of heaven.



Cheat or bug?

How to crack the speed barrier in F-Zero GX

So there's a bug in *F-Zero GX*, then? Fans of the series are wailing into their mousemats while simultaneously posting vitriolic dispatches on forum message boards. "This is an abomination!" rants one; others are rallying the geek corp to harass the publisher with emails. "Make sure you title your email to them '*F-Zero* Bug', that's what I titled mine, so they'll just see a bunch of emails that say '*F-Zero* Bug'," advises one with formidable logic.

There's still much debate and confusion over this 'bug'. For those who have better things to do than read online forums, we'll endeavour to explain the situation. Given the right type of vehicle it is possible to alternately press the left and right triggers plus the appropriate movement of the analogue stick to make your craft snake along the straights and reach speeds in excess of 3,000kph. This devastating move can shave many seconds off lap times and even beat the staff ghost cars by up to 13 seconds on certain courses.

It sounds like a terrible oversight. But there are two things to note about this phenomenon. First, it is not very easy to do. It punishes your wrists and fingers and only works on limited parts of tracks. Second, Nintendo has intimated that this is not a bug at all, but is an intentional part of the game. Certainly there are precedents in other games, for example *Mario Kart 64* and *F-Zero X*, where 'standard' techniques can be combined to improve speed and turning arcs.

In terms of **Edge**'s *F-Zero GX* review this proved problematic. We have always strived to bring bugs to the attention of consumers, but the status of this 'bug' is still uncertain. For the record, **Edge** found the snake technique unworkable and thoroughly enjoyed the game despite the knowledge that it existed. As one forumite put it, "Just don't use it, if you don't want to."

Which is hardly an ideal situation, but until more clarification on the matter is received, **Edge** will treat the technique as if it were an inbuilt cheat, the kind that is hidden in many modern games. Luckily **Edge** will be speaking personally to Toshihiro Nagoshi as part of its forthcoming 'Inside... Sega' feature. Expect the full truth to emerge next month.

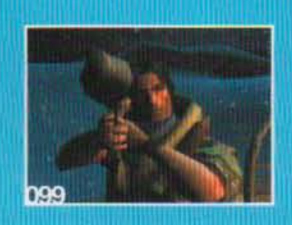














Star Wars: Knights of the Old Repub

Format: Xbox (version tested), PC Publisher: LucasArts/Activision Developer: BioWare Price: $50 (£31) Release: Out now (US), September 12 (UK), December (PC)





Several 'Star Wars' staples appear in the game, from blaster gunfights in starship corridors to Tusken Raiders on Tatooine





Two or three years have passed since LucasArts conceded that the 'Star Wars' brand was no longer synonymous with videogame quality, having fallen victim to the company's post-'Episode I' emphasis on quantity rather than quality. It was a brave confession of guilt in a corporate environment in which admissions of liability are anathema, and the company's subsequent strategy was an apparently admirable one, which would see it entrusting its most valuable IP to a handful of highly talented developers.

"It matches the triumphant tone of the original 'Star Wars' trilogy yet also has the capacity to evoke the darker, tragic descent of the prequels"





BioWare's most significant achievement is that the Light/Dark side dichotomy fundamentally affects the substance of the game, and player choice can dramatically alter the outcome

It's a policy that's so far seen rather mixed results though: the decent enough efforts of Factor 5 with *Rogue Squadron* are scant compensation for the likes of *Obi-Wan* and *Bounty Hunter*, both developed in-house, while Raven Software's normally safe hands dropped the ball with *Jedi Knight II*. But in *Knights of the Old Republic*, LucasArts has discovered a stunning vindication of its new outsourcing policy, and a benchmark that all subsequent 'Star Wars' videogames will have to live up to and ought to aspire to.

It's a remarkable distillation of BioWare's experience and excellence in the development of videogame RPGs and, although it's set some 4,000 years before the events depicted in the original trilogy, it manages to encapsulate the defining features of the films more than almost any other 'Star Wars' title to date.

The game proper commences on the Outer Rim world of Taris, but goes on to span several planets, including Tatooine and the Wookiee homeworld, Kashykk, encompassing a universe-spanning conflict between the Sith and the Jedi. Like BioWare's previous titles, the game mechanics are based on Wizards of the Coast's 'd20' pen-and-paper RPG ruleset, which means they're intuitively understandable by almost anyone who's ever played a videogame RPG. Still, in just one example of the game's cross-genre appeal, statistical micro-management, though possible, is entirely optional. The levelling up of characters, for example, can be wholly automated, while equipping item upgrades is done through a fairly astute interface. Combat can likewise be personalised; as in the *Baldur's Gate* titles, it takes place according to a turn-based ruleset but plays out in realtime. This means that your character can be given orders either in realtime, or while the game is paused, and it's possible to leave your NPC allies to their own devices, or take direct control of them to issue commands. It's even possible to tailor their AI scripts, so their automatic behaviour can suit various playing styles.

Previously in E109, E112, E125









Lightsaber combat is satisfyingly spectacular, but the game poses problems that can be overcome by a much wider range of strategies than just a propensity towards violence

This will be fairly familiar territory to anyone who has played BioWare's previous titles. Indeed there are various scenes and episodes that are resonant of the developer's earlier titles, from NPC romances to courtroom contests. Most important is the overall sense of being caught up in a larger, all-enveloping conflict between warring factions, which lends the game a credible and engaging feel.

The virgin territory of the game's prehistoric setting has proved particularly fertile, having given BioWare the freedom to explore themes that will be familiar to any 'Star Wars' fanboy, and to pursue a similarly epic scope to that of the films themselves. Thus there's an unlikely but satisfying plot twist in the middle of the game, and themes of betrayal and self-sacrifice recur throughout. Specific resonances include a proto-Alderaan sequence which sees the population of an entire planet wiped out, while the game's Sith Lord nemesis, Darth Malak, is a mechanically augmented villain who prefigures the eventual menace of Darth Vader.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the game though, is that it allows players to pursue either the Light side of the Force, or the Dark side. Consequently, as 'Star Wars' die-hards will be pleased to note, it matches the triumphant tone of the original 'Star Wars' trilogy yet also has the capacity to evoke the darker, tragic descent of the prequels. Nonplussed non-fans will simply marvel at the emergent possibilities; even the most simple decision may have the most far-reaching consequences as your character's actions determine which path they will follow.

Ultimately the outcome of the game will vary depending on which path you choose, but there are turning points and alternative outcomes throughout the game that may produce a different result each time the game is played. Does your character take on a bounty contract on an innocent dancing girl to raise some much-needed credits? Or do they attempt to free her from the contract? Or, indeed, do they do nothing at all? Thus an optional sidequest might be









As your character's array of Force powers and Jedi combat skills escalate, the game does become slightly easy, but the real joy of *Knights* is in discovering the nuances of plot





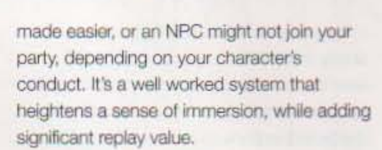




It might seem like an unlikely candidate, but *Knights of the Old Republic* is compatible wit Xbox Live and will receive content updates

Credit cards

Of the three minigames included in Knights of the Old Republic, the most satisfying is Pazaak. It's a bit like a collectable card game version of Pontoon. The object is to draw cards, numbered from one to ten, aiming to reach a score as close to 20 without going over. Throughout the game characters can acquire extra cards for their sideboard; before each match, four cards are drawn from this that can be played at any time to adjust the score. And although a pleasure in its own right, it's also a useful source of credits and an avenue to yet more optional sidequests.



made easier, or an NPC might not join your party, depending on your character's conduct. It's a well worked system that heightens a sense of immersion, while adding significant replay value.

This range of multiple solutions and outcomes is something of a BioWare speciality, and it's not limited to the simple binary opposition of the Light and Dark sides of the Force. While it's possible to complete the game in around 20 hours of play, it's equally conceivable that players will get caught up in the its abundant supply of sidequests and minigames, extending the duration of the title significantly.

Swoop bike racing and Pazaak are each entertaining in their own right, while almost every problem has more than one solution. Talking to NPCs is rarely compulsory, for example, but many conversations produce unexpected benefits or additional goals. Characters who are skilled in the use of computers might be able to hack into security systems, for example, unlocking doors and disabling droids, while characters whose skills lie in other areas might be able to reprogram security droids to do their dirty work for them. The upshot is a gratifying sense of empowerment and freedom.

The only real criticism that can be levelled at *Knights of the Old Republic* is that, particularly towards the end of the game, it all feels fairly easy, but then this is a game that's designed to be experienced rather than conquered, and lightsaber wielding Jedi aren't supposed to find things difficult.

BioWare veterans may miss some of the complexity and size of *Baldur's Gate 2*; the company has necessarily reigned in some of its more self-indulgent development fancies. But the upshot is a title that's more accessible, and one that's more likely to attract players who wouldn't otherwise have the time or inclination for conventional RPGs. Which, quite apart from having created a rich emergent, action-packed, absorbing, epic 'Star Wars' title, is a pretty significant achievement in its own right.

Edge rating: Nine out of te

Republic: The Revolution

Format: **PC** Publisher: **Eidos Interactive** Developer: **Elixir Studios** Price: **£35** Release: **Out now**



Republic **spans three cities, each split into blocks. Working against several other factions, the aim is to gain, and retain, majority support in each**

Tempting as it may be to attribute the poor reception afforded to so many long-delayed, overly-publicised titles to a combination of hype fatigue and tall poppy syndrome, the truth is rather less sinister. Projects ambitious enough to turn heads in their early stages are invariably prone to development difficulties. Delays, cutbacks and the appearance of unforeseen flaws in the original concept are all too common.

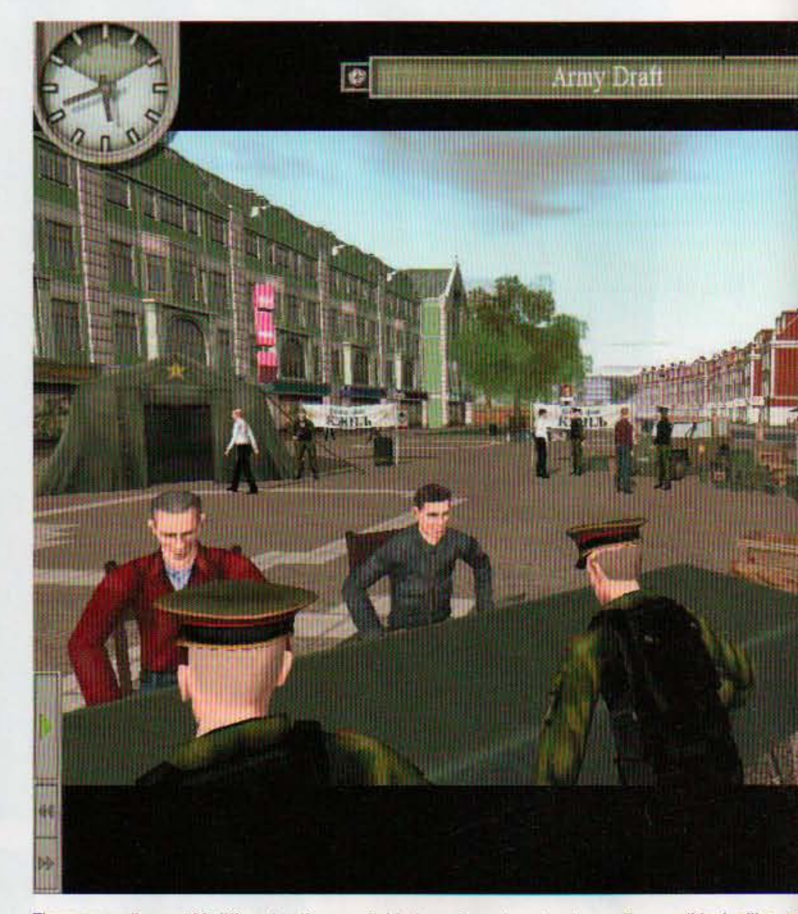
Few games have promised as much as *Republic: The Revolution*. Elixir Studios' Demis Hassabis previously spoke of open-ended gameplay and complex socio-political interaction with a living, free-thinking populace. Amid talk of a million autonomous characters roaming the streets, and buildings rendered using several million polygons apiece, **Edge** couldn't help but wonder how a single game could hope to break new ground in so many areas.

"Gone are the extreme level-of-detail tricks, while framerates crunch and falter all too often on even the mightiest system configurations"

Four years on and *Republic* is revealed as a more familiar and modest proposition. Most prominent is the scaling back of the Totality rendering engine. The game remains handsome, the richly varied architecture and far depth of field throwing up some genuinely inspiring sights. But gone are the extreme level-of-detail tricks that were to have brought every last petal on a flower in an apartment windowbox to life, while framerates crunch and falter all too often on even the mightiest system configurations.

The scope of the game has also clearly been clipped, with fewer cities, fewer factions and, most tellingly, a complete absence of any direct character control. *Republic* has been transformed into a purely point-and-click based game of diplomacy, powerplays and political chicanery.

And yet, although engendering an initial sense of disappointment, these compromises have probably helped create a far more manageable game. The premise of *Republic* also remains as compelling as ever. The story, which casts the gamer as a young activist, determined to rise to power and overthrow the corrupt president of breakaway Soviet state Novistrana, provides the perfect springboard for a game of rare intelligence and subtlety.



There are well over 100 different actions available to various character types. From political rallies, to concerts, army recruitment drives and debt collections, each is elaborately played out in realtime

Granted, this is ultimately another exercise in gathering, retaining and making use of resources (in this case force, influence and wealth). But the goal here isn't to build up stocks of all three. The trio play off against one another, relate to every action taken, and impact on the interplay with other characters. Thus, the fight for power against seven rival factions becomes uniquely organic.

The ideology of the hero character, the avatar, is initially determined by the player's responses in a crude pre-game question-and-answer session. From thereon in, though, the bias changes based on actions taken. Promote free enterprise and wealth will become the dominant trait, use strongarm tactics and your character will be perceived as a dictator in the making. This then impacts on the way other characters respond. Recruited lieutenants may abandon the cause if their ideologies start to conflict with those of the avatar, and it's harder to bend another character's will to that of the party if they're opposed to its radical stance.

In addition each city block has a bias towards one of the three ideologies. Succeed in winning an area over and the reward is a related resource bonus at the end of every day. Resource points can then in turn be spent on further actions carried out by the avatar and his party members. Even the choice of actions available is determined by the interplay of force, influence and wealth. A lieutenant who works at the newspaper is likely to favour influence and so have access to a range of actions based on persuasion, while a businessman might favour the use of bribes and other financial tactics.

It's an intricately layered design that is, unfortunately a little bewildering in the early stages. It also necessitates a cumbersome user interface – icons requiring lengthy



Gaining the upper hand

When attempting to recruit a new activist to the cause or sway the opinion of a public figure, it's necessary to win an opponent over in a war of words. As with so many other elements of *Republic: The Revolution*, the conversation is played using a rather abstract but effective points-based system, one that will be easily grasped by fans of 'Magic: The Gathering'.

Previously in E78, E86, E99, E110, E112












explanation are always an annoyance. But confusion does give way to an appreciation for the well balanced dynamics, and even the point-and-click system ultimately feels like a transparent tool rather than an obstacle.

That all control is based around this interface does highlight a key problem, though. Aside from the need to venture into the third dimension to observe and influence the outcome of a few interactions, the game is actually played out on an overhead city map. Observing a whole city alive with activity is impressive, and there's fun to be had watching rallies, raids, covert meetings and other events played out by the highly detailed inhabitants of Novistrana. But the path to power is a rather slow one, and the appeal of these interludes soon palls and the 3D is all but forgotten. It seems ridiculous that so much time and effort has been invested in a 3D engine that's surplus to requirements.

Unfortunately, sticking to the map view also removes the sense of epic wonder, the game devolving from world sim to a boardgame-based tug of war. Fighting for the largest slices of a series of pie charts, it's easy to ignore how many variables are at play or what's being represented. The abstract map display also masks much of the variety offered by the many actions available. Coupled with a progression curve that starts well then all but flatlines, it's worryingly easy to lose patience and interest.

In the short term *Republic* does offer an entertaining depiction of spin, manipulation and power broking. But while undeniably fascinating, it's also very clearly flawed. **Edge** can only applaud Elixir Studios' ambition. But what promised to be revolutionary has emerged as a mere curio. A shame.

Edge rating: Six out of ten



Although ultimately unnecessary, *Republic*'s 3D portion is undeniably well implemented, with rich architectural detail and an AI system that fills the streets with elaborate events and an ever-active populace

Boktai

Format: **Game Boy Advance** Publisher: **Konami** Developer: **In-house** Price: **¥4,800 (£25)** Release: **Out now (Japan), TBC (UK)**



Defeating mini-bosses is easier with the sun shining bright. Should you encounter one in the gloaming, *Boktai* always offers the option of a saving the game or using the GBA's Sleep mode









Here's the answer to your question. You can't. Not with fluoro tubes, not with halogen spots, not with sun-beds. Internet rumours persist that the glow of a barbecue late at night will fool it, but the fact remains that *Boktai* has to be played in daylight. Not, you'll note, in sunlight. Kojima-san isn't quite as prejudiced against cloudy northern climes as it first appeared.

This isn't as bad as it sounds. Although daylight effectively forms your ammunition, the game will automatically bank light energy whenever you play outside. Indoor games can be fuelled by withdrawals from your sunlight account or by summoning a loan shark who will refill your gauge at a heavy price. In emergencies, you can hunt for the twinkle of light crystals, which appear only at night, to top you up. Only for a handful of specific occasions is external daylight unavoidably essential.

"Office-bound players will find themselves holding their GBAs in the air, hoping a stray ray will angle into their window and recharge them"

None of which changes the fact it is the key to this game. Once the sun-meter rises above a dreary two bars, the world of *Boktai* undergoes a subtle transformation. Enemies can be dispatched by pushing them into the light from dungeon windows, and hidden walkways and mysterious towers gleam into existence. Just as plucky Jango holds his Gun de Sol aloft to recharge it, so office-bound players will find themselves extending their GBAs in the air, hoping a stray ray will angle in from the window and recharge them.

The system adds a whole new rhythm to the game experience: complete a dungeon tucked up in bed, and you have no choice but to wait for dawn to tackle its master. **Edge** is altogether unaccustomed to pelting downstairs to catch a break in the clouds. But is there a game behind the gimmick?

There is. *Boktai* re-invigorates almost every aspect of the tired dungeon-and-items formula. The game is utterly uncluttered with RPG paraphernalia. There are no errands to run, no villagers to interrogate, no armour to collect. Central to this simplicity is the magnificent Gun de Sol. Constructed from four components, it can b[e] configured into dozens of combinations. Lenses can transform stored light energy int[o] beams of heat or cold, and different barrels alter the weapon's function from a lightsaber to a shotgun to a guided-missile launcher. A[s] well as increasing your offensive capabilities, the gun plays a problem-solving role, melting obstacles and triggering switches.

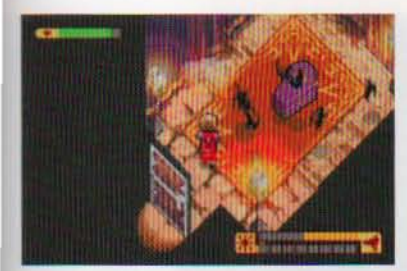
Kojima-san's trademark stealth is lovingl[y], if simply, implemented and the main thrust o[f] the game is sneak rather than storm, ambush rather than attack. Your success is rated by a scoring system – each dungeon i[s] broken down into sections, with rank demandingly dependent on speed, times discovered, continues used and light stored. The game's end comes quickly, within ten hours, but is accompanied by a breakdown of your overall performance which makes replaying irresistible. All weapons and items





***Boktai* is a beautiful game in every respect. Animation is elegant and graceful, the levels are designed with Escher-inspired intricacy, and the music is sparse, melodious and memorable**

Previously in E122, E125











A huge range of power-ups offer Jango such bonuses as super-speed or silent steps. Planting them at the base of the great tree allows you to grow your own hybrids











are retained for your second run, changing S ranks from impossible to imaginable.

If the stealth aspect slows your progress, the puzzles will periodically bring it to a halt. Traditional block pushing evolves into epic spatial tests which often seem flatly impossible on first inspection. As the game progresses new tweaks come into play, with blocks that melt or grow. The number challenges range from the insulting (rearrange 1, 1, 2, +, = anyone?) to the crafty, and their later colour-based twists will leave you staring hard and still at your GBA screen whether in sun or cloud. As long as the English translation avoids laboured hand-holding then finding the solutions will remain immensely satisfying.

Not that the game is ever ponderous. Jango pelts along at a bearable clip, and a battery of warps and shortcuts ease the pain of any voluntary backtracking. Enemies are charismatic, and their individual natures – invisible, flammable, panicky, forgetful – break up the familiar pattern of corridors and chambers. Traps and mini-bosses provide an opportunity to unleash any frustration built up from tests of stealthy patience.

The nearest there is to a fundamental fault is that the action button is a little too context sensitive. Stand a couple of pixels too far away and nothing happens. And for all of *Boktai*'s innovations, the steady pattern of explore, avoid and solve wears thin by the finish. The inevitable roster of boss battles that end the game are a let-down in a game that has worked so hard at being fresh.

To call *Boktai* a novelty shouldn't be an insult. The light-sensor technology works flawlessly, and opens up a host of possibilities for future games. For its debut, however, Konami has attached a game with enough style and substance to stand soundly on its own merits.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten

The final meltdown

Each dungeon must be completed forwards and backwards. Once Jango has found the immortal lurking at the core, he must defeat him and drag his coffin back to the daylight where his sunflower mentor will help banish the undead fiend for good. Finding a return route for the coffin can be challenging, especially since the uneasy corpse has a mind of its own. And if Jango leaves it too long unattended it will start to inch back to its lair, rather like a guilty puppy.

R-Type Final

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **SCEJ** Developer: **Irem** Price: **¥6,800 (£32)** Release: **Out now (Japan), January 30, 2004 (UK)**

Of all the taglines applied to software over the last 20 years, 'Final' isn't one to be trusted. Perhaps indicative of current mood; perhaps a deceitful attempt on the part of Irem to drum up interest, one thing is certain: in the eyes of publishers, the 2D shooter genre is dead. Recent successes such as *Ikaruga* and *Dodonpachi Dai-Ou-Jou*, or the forthcoming *Gradius V*, or bizarre post-mortal Dreamcast outing *Border Down*, are of little to no consequence – those who appreciate a supposedly dimensionally-challenged, repetitive, irrelevant slice of blasting action are of an opinion that, commercially, simply doesn't count.

"To those gamers who can still smell the silver coins on their fingers, this is dangerously close to being the best in the genre"



Those expecting screenfuls of fast-moving enemy flak will find themselves disappointed. However, every bullet, particularly the slow-moving sort, is deadly accurate. Old-skool, indeed



Family ties

As if reinforcing the finality of the title, Irem has included a collection of 101 ships to unlock and employ. Following a family tree of sorts, variation in boss and level structure, plus the obligatory playtime/progress input yields a new ship each time you play. Four are password-locked and many have only minor differences, if not zero use, but they remain a welcome inclusion, nonetheless.

So why the game? Irem itself has stated that this last chapter will hopefully represent the pinnacle of the genre. And given the climate in which it flies, the temptation of an all-encompassing swansong for the Bydo Saga should make those in the know rabid with anticipation. But no more than half an hour's play makes obvious the fact that there has scarcely been any progress since1987's original outing.

The play is nigh-on identical, save for a controllable ship speed. Shades of *Thunderforce V*, *Gate of Thunder* and *Sol-Feace* abound within the first levels, but the similarity with both *Last Resort* and *Pulstar* (admittedly, *R-Type* clones) is borderline plagiarism. Not counting some of the most crippling examples of slowdown ever, or Irem's glaring penchant for regurgitating its own set-pieces and bosses, it is only the hardware that will convince most players this is a modern game. Those weaned on *Medal of Honor* or *SOCOM* will despise *R-Type Final* for everything it does.

But in truth, all of the above is exactly what will light fires in the eyes of those that know the genre so intimately. In fact, latecomers only familiar with the works of Cave and Psikyo may find themselves under considerable stress when attempting to gain access to Irem's archetypal game mechanics: this is no twitch gameplay, instead a revisiting of the classic remote-controlled Force, rebounding lasers and slow, piecemeal advancement.

Naturally, self-referential inclusions are there for the spotting, be it level three's obligatory behemoth ship; snaking cannon fodder or the giant-mawed serpent guarding the entrance to the fifth area. Equally, the game's slowdown forms a welcome flaw, being a staple part of nearly all 2D shooters, great and poor alike – just witness Konami's switchable option for it in *Gradius III & IV* to be convinced of its importance. Indeed, the very fact that so little has been tampered with is testament to how faultless the original blueprint was.

Controlling the R9 (or any of its 101 variants – see Family ties) is deceptively simple. Standard direction and rapid fire suffice, but the ever-present Force is as versatile as ever. Bolt on either front or rear as a shield, use as a free-floating gun pod/battering ram, or hold down 'fire' to charge up for a devastating discharge. Different Forces allow for altered levels of charge (up to a colossal seven) as well as a plethora of weapon variations, but each adheres to the original trio of styles – forward, diagonal or vertical fire. Learning which to use for each area is a skill and any wayward





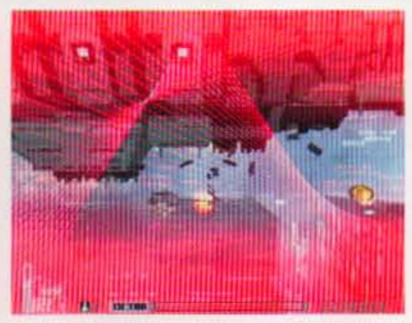
Irem has rendered some wonderfully pyrotechnic displays of light and colour. Be warned, though: it's possible to get lost within such explosions and wander into the path of stray bullets













Hitting different parts of level guardians causes area triggers (or 'boss switches') to activate. These introduce subtle changes – witness this once-green land as an arid shadow of its former self (above left)

choice will leave you under-funded and hemmed-in. One useful trait is the ability for a disconnected Force to absorb power when in contact with larger enemies. Once the gauge tips 100 per cent, a screen-wide strike can be issued, again, the results dependent on the combination of ship and Force.

Even alone, this mix is well-oiled enough to deliver many plum moments, but the real depth emerges later, when players find themselves able to issue several commands all in the same digital breath: *R-Type Final*'s later stages often expect the pilot to manoeuvre, charge up and fire, change speed and release/retract the Force simultaneously. The real surprise is just how possible this combination of button presses is, such is the virtual invisibility of the game's interface. Given the Grail-like nature of such control systems, Irem's reluctance to tweak is understandable.

Conversely, the game's skin benefits from a grand 3D makeover, a tenfold improvement on *R-Type Delta*'s shuffling mess of polygons. Here, graphical artefacts such as splines, folding or clipping are non-existent. The downside is that such enormously detailed output from the PS2's GPU results in several heavy doses of the aforementioned slowdown. Quantifying this can be summed up by the following observation: *Super R-Type* has nothing on this.

There are those who will argue that *Final* serves no purpose in a world of 3D, stealth-based gameplay and online cooperation. But to those who treat mould-breaking games as life's milestones; those who can still smell the silver coins on their fingers – those who will spot Mr Heli somewhere in that 101 – this is dangerously close to the best in the genre.

Irem's goal was to create "a shooter that cannot be bettered." Extensive playtesting shows that this is not the case – *R-Type Final* is only 'excellent', a self-indulgent, postmodern and immutably arranged rehash of a dead genre; riddled with judder, desperately slow, a merciless exercise in memory and unfettered patience. And that's its greatest triumph.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten

F-Zero GX

Format: **GameCube** Publisher: **Nintendo** Developer: **Amusement Vision** Price: **¥6,800 (£36)** Release: **Out now (Japan), October (UK)**





Jeff Minter would be proud of the trippy Phantom Road (above) while the lack of barriers around Sand Ocean (top) is disconcerting to all but the spatially aware





There were many that bought an import SNES on the strength of *F-Zero* alone, even at the inflated price of £400. But while the brand still has cachet today, there have been so many super-fast futuristic racers that it's difficult to get excited about another one. And with *F-Zero* you know exactly what you're going to get, but thankfully, this doesn't stop the latest instalment being utterly absorbing.

"The game is hard, and though skill and patience are rewarded, there will be many that won't have the stamina to forgive multiple deaths"





Win a few races and you can begin constructing your own F-Zero craft. Thousands of combinations are possible and the finished ship will even be christened with its own name

Famously, Nintendo handed this project over to Amusement Vision to develop, and the game is suffused with the team's trademark touches. Speed, character, control and imaginative course design make this the best in the series. Take a ride around Vegas Palace and you'd be forgiven for thinking you've fallen through a rip in the scenery and into a level of *Super Monkey Ball*. Giant grinning clowns, huge roulette wheels and neon signs provide the background to one of the best tracks in the game. But while the visual style maybe familiar the speed is unworldly.

Here's the deal: each race is three laps long and there are five races in each championship. On the first lap you must use the considerable speed of your craft to overtake as many of the 29 opponents as possible. Once you have completed the first lap, speed-boosts become available, but unlike the original *F-Zero* these are only limited by the amount of energy left in your tank. Run out of energy, however, and your craft is vulnerable to attacks from other competitors. Take one more knock when your shield energy is out and your ship will explode, ending your race.

Learning to boost effectively is crucial, then. All too often you may find yourself in the lead on the final lap but woefully short of boost juice. Like a marathon runner with no sprint finish it's disheartening to see streams of rivals overtaking you seconds before the finish line. But you learn fast in *F-Zero*. Each track has its own character and challenges: combining your own manua speed-boosts with those laid out on the course is the key to success. The brilliance of the game is that even when the championships have been won, you always feel like you can go back to shave split seconds off your fastest lap times.

But it's far from flawless. The 29 other racers are noticeably bunched up, so even if you put in two and a half impeccable laps, a small mistake on the final home straight can

Previously in E115, E118, E125





The leaps of faith are even more frightening in *GX* than they were in *F-Zero X*. Move the nose down for additional speed, but only if you dare







see the rest of the field overtaking you. There are moments, too, when you feel your fate is out of your control. A random, unseen barge, or boost from a rival into the back of your craft will make you plummet over the side of the track to oblivion. This is not such a problem on the first three championships – Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald – but open up the Diamond cup (by completing the first three championships on Standard difficulty) and the lack of barriers is alarming. The game is hard, and though skill and patience are rewarded, there will be many that won't have the stamina to forgive multiple deaths on some of the hardest tracks, such as Sand Ocean and Phantom Road.

Despite these minor imperfections *F-Zero GX* has it where it counts. The combination of blistering speed, responsive controls and rivals with genuine personality makes this one of the most addictive games of the year. If you're searching for a racing title with that one-more-go factor, look no further.

A Customisation mode also adds replay value. Tickets can be won from completing events in the other game modes and spent in the F-Zero shop. Along with unlocking all the other racers in the game (only Captain Falcon, Pico, Samurai Goroh and Dr Stewart are available initially) these tickets can be spent on parts to build your own craft, complete with player fashioned decals. Experimenting with your own mad designs and developing a ship to suit your own play style adds a new fun dimension.

Those with *F-Zero* friends will find the multiplayer races enough to sate competitive appetites. While some detail and scenery is removed, especially in the fourplayer variant, it clips along at the same startling speed. No one expected a radical departure from the *F-Zero* heritage, but the surprise here is that Amusement Vision has bettered the previous Nintendo-developed versions. *F-Zero GX* represents yet another reason to keep faith in the GameCube.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten

Tales of the city

Story mode is weird. You'd expect it to ease you into the *F-Zero GX* universe, but it does quite the opposite. A series of nine tasks book-ended with puerile cut-scenes, the mode is extremely difficult. A typical challenge consists of racing a competitor through a canyon while avoiding falling boulders. It's trial-and-error gameplay from another era, but not without some merit. On the default difficulty setting these missions are tough, but on Hard they take hours of practice. Luckily, it is possible to unlock further chapters in the F-Zero shop.

Freedom Fighters

Format: **PS2 (version tested), Xbox, GC** Publisher: **Electronic Arts** Developer: **Io Interactive** Price: **£40** Release: **September 19** Previously in **E**123, **E**125, **E**126

Edge can't fault the premise. Pesky Russians invade New York, and as a golden summer sun fades to steely snow, a plumber and his friends try to shoot them all in the head. Hooray!

Commanding your squad is basic, efficient and flexible. Defend, attack and assemble commands can be given to individuals as well as the group, and targets can be assigned either with a general wave of the thirdperson hand, or the precise designator of the firstperson target. Spreading these commands across separate buttons makes the system quick and memorable, but comes at a price. Firstperson mode is activated by holding in the left stick, a wearing and occasionally precarious solution which can't be altered in the options.

Your squad responds to these commands with alacrity and common sense, which frees you up to lark around. They can be relied upon to manage a frontal assault while you nip around the side and take out an entire pillbox with your wrench alone. The Russians, on the other hand, are dolefully, desperately dumb. Shoot one, point blank, in the back and he might well spin round and empty his machine gun into you. But he's just as likely to start taking pot shots at a distant member of your squad, or drop into an exaggerated 'what was that?' crouch, or stand manfully still and ignore you. While the latter might be a sophisticated commentary on the stoicism required to endure the brutalities of Soviet Russia, **Edge** isn't inclined to give it the benefit of the doubt.

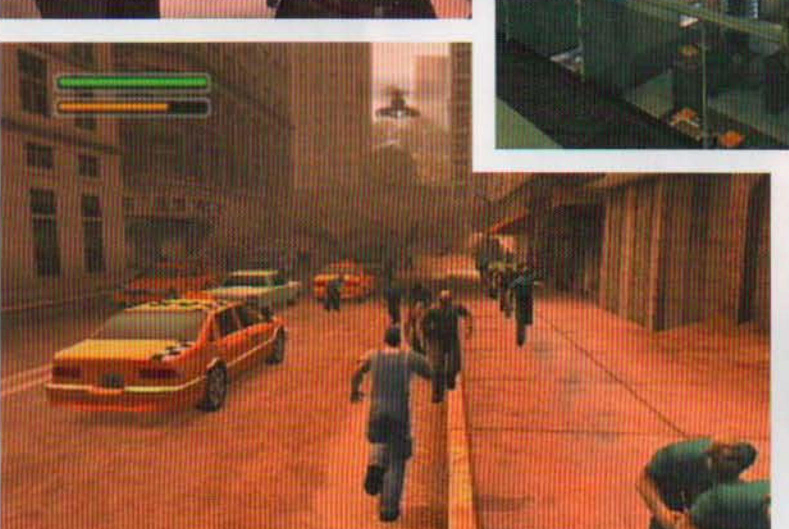
Their stupidity doesn't damage the game irreversibly. It's a blaster at heart, and the Russians are there to be mown down, not to provoke tactical head-scratching. Opening up on them with a commandeered machine gun is as satisfying as sniping a nearby fuel-dump into an impressive inferno. Your own weapons, however, are somewhat disappointing. Few in number and limited in style, none of them offers the visceral satisfaction a game like this needs.

The game's great strength, however, is the well-judged escalation of pace and scale. From your humble dungarees-and-pistol beginnings, the expansion of your squad means missions intensify from hit-and-run raids to large-scale onslaughts. And it is this, ultimately, which induces a sensation of swaggering brawn that allows the game's hiccups to be forgiven.

Edge rating: Six out of ten









Completing mission objectives is rewarded with Charisma Points. The more you collect, the larger your potential squad. Neatly, using your own medipacks on wounded Russian soldiers converts them to your cause







Rather than inevitable deathmatches, the squad-based nature of the game is carried through to the multiplayer maps. Capture the flag becomes a frenetic test of grenade accuracy and tactical improvisation (above)



Jingo inferno

At a time when a tale of gung-ho Americanism could be seen as horribly crass, *Freedom Fighters* ducks out of the firing line by virtue of its unabashed patriotic zeal. Re-writing the history of the last 50 years (the Russians 'win' WWII by dropping an atom bomb on Berlin) turns the US into the underdog, legitimising any amount of fist-pumping. Each mission ends with Chris hoisting the Stars and Stripes from the flagpole of each recaptured building, and whatever your views on regime change, it's hard not to holler your delight.

Star Wars: Galaxies – An Empire Divided

Format: **PC** Publisher: **Sony Online Entertainment** Developer: **In-house** Price: **$50 (£31) plus $11 (£7) per month** Release: **Out now (US), TBC (UK)** Previously in **E112, E119**













The gameworld is huge, including large areas of the film planets Naboo and Tatooine, as well as planets from the rest of the franchise, such as Yavin IV and Han Solo's Corellia



Areas such as the cantina and the hospital become very important to healing players. Player death is dealt with through clones, with players returning from the dead with only minor penalties

Morphology

While *Galaxies* was much touted for its lovely 3D engine, it's only the player models that are really interesting. Even online there's a physiognomy engine to play with at character creation time and there are endless items that can be equipped from the player's inventory. All the characters even wear underwear to protect their decency. Ever wondered what Greedo looked like in his pants and vest? Now you know.

Star Wars: Galaxies does not offer fans of the franchise any heroics. There is nothing dramatic or cinematic about the MMRPG game model as defined by *EverQuest*, and *Galaxies*, based on similar turn-based combat and complex statistical interfaces, does very little to break that mould. Proceedings might be draped in 'Star Wars' finery, but initial impressions are of a popular game model that's now showing its age.

There's something ludicrous about attacking a log to the blare of John Williams' score, or lamenting the fall of a Twi'Lek felled by a growling butterfly, or hearing a hubbub in a market-place populated by a lone NPC. Adventures in these worlds are limited in scope and are far from the dynamic opera of the films they're based on. Advancement often seems to consist of simply bashing space-rats and looting their resources. This is where the *EverQuest* game model falls down. It bores, it embarrasses. Battles between players are dull and the great Rebel–Imperial conflict is largely reduced to blowing up a few metal buildings.

Yet SOE has done much that is commendable with this broken model and seeks to counter tedium with a wealth of activities, careers and professions. This diversity gives rise to a wealth of interactivity between players. The various professions depend on one another to advance their skills and notoriety. Weary warriors need entertainers to remove battle fatigue, budding artisans need the skills of the wilderness scouts to gather materials to make weapons and armour. Groups survive in the wilderness with medics to patch up wounds and campsites to relax in. An entertainer will put away their energy rifle and pull out the space-sax for some light jazz. The player-driven, auction-based economy is fascinating too, with artisans able to create and modify a vast range of commodities, from basic blasters, to an array of personal droids.

With the game constantly being patched and social factors blossoming through player-driven activities there are real opportunities for improvement. The forthcoming spaceship add-on will bring a new dimension, too. But, as it stands, *Galaxies* is a foray into well-trodden territory. Ultimately, *PlanetSide* and *Eve Online* provide far more interesting prospects for the long-term investment of time and money that this latest generation of online games demand.

Edge rating: Five out of ten

The Italian Job: LA Heist

Format: **PS2 (version tested), GC, Xbox** Publisher: **Eidos Interactive** Developer: **Climax (Brighton Studio)** Price: **£40** Release: **September 5**

Previously in **E**125, **E**126

Please forgive **Edge**: at the time of writing, the remake of the 1969 film has still to receive a European release, but what is clear from your first handbrake turn is that the game is hampered by a bunkum plot and a restrictive Story mode. A good deal of enjoyment comes from the energetic handling and knock-about physics of the vehicles, but there's always a checkpoint to reach, van to follow or rival to race. It gets dull very quickly.

The Story mode is further marred by missions that are generally grouped in threes. Pass the first two but fail the third and you have to pump your enthusiasm enough to start the series again. It's the cheapest way to extend a game's lifespan and is monumentally stupid on the final series where one of the missions takes over five minutes to complete.

Away from the restrictions enforced by the licence the game improves. Free Roam gives you unlimited access to the excellently designed LA streets and rooftops, while Stunt mode also takes greater advantage of the exquisite physics engine. A fun game at its heart, then, but some wrong-headed design robs it of true spirit.

Edge rating: Five out of ten









Climax has captured the vacuous, low-rise essence of LA perfectly. Free Roam allows you to cruise the streets and search for shortcuts and extravagant ramps. But why are there no added incentives such as stunt scoring or accumulators? A missed opportunity

Group S Challenge

Format: **Xbox** Publisher: **Capcom** Developer: **In-house** Price: **£40** Release: **Out now**

Previously in **E**125



The environments are well recreated but can contribute, particularly during early races, to the occasional soulless nature of the events. It's also worth mentioning the tortuous menu progression although at least the garage screen layout is better thought out than *GT*'s equivalent. But in every other respect *Group S* is beneath it







Edge expected *Group S Challenge* to take its inspiration from *Gran Turismo*, but the extent to which this game apes Sony's genre leader is simply astonishing. The startup sequence before every race is identical, as are – you'll no doubt notice once you're moving – the HUD layout and typography, as well as the post- (and pre-, for that matter) race screen. It shouldn't therefore surprise you to learn that the replays are also a carbon copy of Polyphony's.

This last element immediately highlights the lack of finesse *Group S Challenge* suffers from when placed alongside the game it imitates – although generally good, there's nevertheless a distinct lack of visual detail.

Significantly more damaging is the failure to replicate *GT*'s handling model. Even when driven in full race trim, every vehicle feels ponderous and with overly soft suspension often resulting in an unnecessarily laborious control method. Should you spin out though, your AI opponents often wait for you. It's not a bad game, by any means, but the enjoyment provided is limited.

Edge rating: Five out of ten

Downhill Domination

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **SCEA** Developer: **Incog** Price: **$40 (£25)** Release: **Out now (US), TBC (UK)**







Trees are your enemy. On some mountains there's so much woodland, and your speed is so blistering, that the game often feels a like a 128bit version of the Spectrum favourite, *3D Deathchase*



There's something very appealing about hurtling down a mountain on a pushbike, and as it's now a sport, **Edge** knew it wouldn't be long before more videogame interpretations hit the shelves. *Downhill Domination* doesn't take itself too seriously, but while it wins points for thrills and comic excess, it receives demerits for poor control feedback and lack of handling nuance.

It's disappointing to find that a game so reliant upon riding earthy mounds, avoiding rocks and leaping chasms leaves the player feeling disassociated from the environments. For all the sensory feedback produced you could as well be controlling a futuristic hoverboard. This is all the more galling because the courses have been designed with imagination and thoughtfulness. Most transmit a tremendous sense of elevation and undulation; there are multiple routes and you'll spend much of the time searching for shortcuts.

The racing may not be gracious but it has a frenetic energy: it's somewhere between a hyperactive *SSX Tricky* and a brutal *Road Rash*. The best word to describe it? Mental.

Edge rating: Six out of ten

Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour

Format: **GameCube** Publisher: **Nintendo** Developer: **Camelot** Price: **$50 (£32)** Release: **Out now (US), 2004 (UK)**

Previously in **E**125

Mario Golf might just be one of the finest games every made. It's the only explanation **Edge** can think of for how it remains playable despite having so very many things wrong with it.

The camera constantly denies you the angle you need to satisfactorily line up approach shots, and frequently misses the moment when the ball actually goes in the hole. The putting bar is so badly calibrated that the better your previous shot, the harder and twitchier your putt becomes. Spin bears no resemblance to actual ball physics, instead adding an ugly spurt as your ball slows. If you hesitate for more than three seconds (**Edge** has timed it), perhaps transfixed by the cluttered and confusing game screen, a hoard of 'boos' start scrolling across the screen, chittering and dragging banners bearing patronising tips.

But there is no denying that all you expect is there. The golf is fully featured, the courses evolve in charm and ingenuity and the range of minigames is extensive. The question is whether or not you will be prepared to dig beneath the old-fashioned thinking and the inept presentation to find it.

Edge rating: Six out of ten









Whilst the various minigame iterations extend the lifespan of the title, the ever-present nagging of the boos is enough to make Edge wish it had turned up early and bombed the entire tournament

Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack

Format: **Game Boy Advance** Publisher: **Atari** Developer: **UGA/3d6** Price: **£30** Release: **September 12**

The creative ramifications of Sega's reshuffle aren't clear at the time of writing, but if United Game Artist's design ethic is going to be lost along with his sub-division's name, then at least Mizuguchi-san can take comfort in the fact that his company produced two of the most beautiful videogames of all time. Of course, there might not have been a reshuffle if the games had been as successful commercially as they were critically; and that brings us here, to *Space Channel 5* on the GBA, and Sega trying to scrape the last dollars from another franchise ill-suited to the tiny screen.

It's identical to the DC version, being 'Simon Says' for rhythm-action fans, and dressed in the sexiest space chic ever seen on a game system. It's perhaps slightly better beat-matched than its judgemental bigger brother, but the trade-off is predictable. *Ulala* is still stylish, but it leaves you pining for crisper graphics, better audio, more speech. Polish and beauty is the essence of *Ulala*, and while this conversion is superb, it's simply not made for the small screen. It's large, loud and beautiful, and that's how it should be.

Edge rating: Five out of ten









Since the game is so dependent on audio, those wishing to take advantage of the GBA's portable nature will have to remember to purchase a headphone adapter, or risk annoying everyone within earshot with tiny, tinny chu chu chus

Winning Eleven 7

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Konami** Developer: **In-house (KCET)** Price: **¥6,800 (£36)** Release: **Out now (Japan), TBC (UK)**





Charging runs are even less likely to succeed than ever. So the fleshed-out trick options are crucial and revolve around the D-pad or left stick, shoulder buttons and the right stick (which, for example, must be rotated 360° for the Zidane turn). To accommodate these additions, manual passing with the right stick now requires an R3 press to execute





Winning Eleven 7's new features are the most significant of any next-gen version yet. The trademark passing game is intact, but now the ball can be advanced in more elastic and unexpected shapes. *WE6*'s player movement and passing feels scripted by comparison. In conjunction with a host of new special moves, this change of balance helps distinguish slower star players and contributes to a more rewarding singleplayer game than before.

Multiplayer benefits from all this, too, and its options are more flexible than ever. There are more teams, stadiums, training tasks and all-new customisable variables – which range from a *Libero Grande* option to an unlockable 'Keystone Cops' game speed from the inaugural *WE* shop. Master League has undergone a major restructuring and been extended and complicated further, while crisp, recognisable player models, motion blur, in-game replays and pretty additions to the animation library are the most obvious benefactors of *WE7*'s *FIFA*-baiting, graphical makeover. More of the same, then, for those who don't care, but a whole new world of compulsion for those who do.

Edge rating: Nine out of ten

Space Invaders

Edge takes a fresh look at a seminal game classic from yesteryear

Format: Arcade | Publisher: Taito | Developer: In-house | Release: 1978

SCORE<1> HI-SCORE SCORE<2>
0240 0000





3 CREDIT 01

When you are really in trouble, and the invaders are looking right down your throat, they cannot fire, giving you at least half a chance...

Is Atari's dominance of the videogame world about to come to an explosive end? Because the appearance of *Space Invaders* certainly demonstrates that Japan is taking gaming seriously: Taito's cabinet is more sophisticated and compelling than anything coming out of the United States right now.

Moving on a horizontal axis across the base of the screen, you control a laser base defending Earth from wave after wave of variously-shaped alien enemies. Rather than simply going toe to toe with the invaders, however, you have the benefit of working behind four buildings capable of absorbing the attacks being spat from above.

However, each hit erodes the buildings' structure, and as war progresses the bombed-out shells provide less and less cover for the player. Play therefore becomes a cunning combination of attack and defence, the environment giving the game an essential additional layer of strategy.

Your assailants maintain a strictly regimented manner of attack, trooping from left to right as a group, then reversing movement – but, crucially, having manoeuvred further towards your position. As you pop members of their ranks out of the sky, the advancing army gathers speed, eventually reaching a frenzied velocity which culminates in the viciously picky procedure of removing the last warrior, an undertaking that recalls swatting a particularly annoyed wasp.

Playing *Space Invaders* can be a thoroughly hypnotic experience, your assailants' movements accompanied by grinding bass notes whose simplistic tones recall John Williams' classic 'Jaws' theme music, but with a techno fuzz all of their own. It is an insanely intense experience, especially when your adversaries are almost upon you, your cover has all but evaporated, and there are no more lives left in the bank.

Space Invaders sets a new standard for arcade action. It will be interesting to see how Taito follows it up – and even more exciting, perhaps, to see how Atari counters...

Edge rating: Nine out of ten

SCORE<1> HI-SCORE SCORE<2>
0040 0000





3 CREDIT 01

Success in *Space Invaders* can be expedited by taking advantage of a coding quirk that sends a bonus ship across every 14 shots. Cunning

=? MYSTERY
=30 POINTS
=20 POINTS
=10 POINTS

The final frontier

As you'd expect from something manufactured 25 years ago, when processing technology was still at an embryonic stage, *Space Invaders* cannot even hope to stimulate on a visual level today. But its gameplay retains an earthy appeal, and playing it now for even ten minutes immediately reminds you of the varied approaches it was possible to take when taking down alien waves. As a nostalgia trip, there aren't many games to beat it.

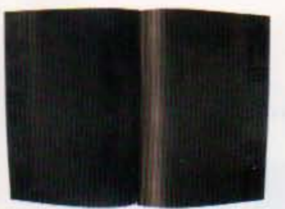
The making of…

Edge

Future Publishing launched **Edge** as a new kind of videogame magazine. It went on to outlive many of the hardware formats it covered and is still going strong after seeing in a new millennium. Here, **Edge** rather self-indulgently looks back to the launch of the very first issue…



















































Freddie Mercury's 'Living on my Own' was riding atop the charts, having toppled Take That's 'Pray'. Ex-circus performer John Major was still Prime Minister and just about in charge of the Conservative Party. Trip Hawkins had just launched the 3DO. The CD-ROM was apparently going to usher in a new era of videogaming. The PS-X was little more than a glint in Ken Kutaragi's eye, while the Dolphin and the Xbox hadn't even progressed that far. Videogame hardware such as the Mega Drive and SNES were supported by magazines such as 'SuperPlay', 'Mean Machines', 'Computer & Video Games', 'The One', 'Sega Power' and even 'Sinclair User'. What was then the 'World Wide Web' was still in its infancy. Members of the current **Edge** editorial team were variously working hard in sixth forms or universities around the country. And, on August 19, 1993, **Edge** magazine was launched.

That first issue arrived in an opaque black bag, loudly proclaiming that it "wasn't for everyone"; a multiformat videogame magazine aimed at older, serious gamers. Underneath the masthead was a list of the hardware formats that it would cover: Mega Drive, Super Nintendo, PC, Amiga, PC Engine, Neo Geo and 3DO. It was largely the brainchild of launch editor **Steve Jarratt**, who had started his career in videogame journalism on 'Zzap!64', along with publisher **Steve Carey** and art editor **Matthew Williams**. The rest of the editorial team on the launch issue consisted of deputy art editor Rob

Original format: **Royal Press 90gsm, 280mm x 210mm**
Publisher: **Future Publishing**
Developer: **Carey, Jarratt, Williams, Abbott, Wylie, Brookes, Andreas**
Origin: **UK**
Original release date: **1993**



The first issue of **Edge** saw various luminaries, including a youthful Jez San, indulge in some idle speculation about what the future held for games

Abbott, production editor Harry Wylie, and two writers, Jason Brookes (who would go on to edit the magazine from **E**10) and George Andreas.

"Every issue we'll be fighting to ensure you're ahead of the field for news and previews of videogames," read the editor's introduction. "And when we aren't first with a game it's because it's not worth your time… or because we'll be bringing you the whole story – not just a handful of intro screenshots and a mouthful of garbled rumour." Inside, a range of pundits made their predictions for the future of videogames, including George Lucas and Arthur C Clarke. The news pages reported Commodore and Atari's bid to enter the CD market, and the Japanese launch of Pioneer's LaserActive system, before managing to fit the release schedules for all the platforms on the cover into just two pages (not something that would be possible in today's era of videogame proliferation). Highlights included previews of *Dungeon Master II*, *Rise of the Robots* and *Virtua Racing*, features about 3DO and the impact of Dolby Surround and Qsound, and reviews of *Street Fighter II Turbo* on SNES, *Mortal Kombat* on SNES and *Gunstar Heroes* on the Mega Drive (which was unfairly admonished for a lack of secrets or hidden levels).

Reading through the first issue of **Edge**, it's clear that the videogame industry, and its attendant specialist press, were both very different to the corporate leviathans that later evolved. **Simon Byron**, now working at videogame PR agency Barrington Harvey was editor of 'The One' ("Britain's least-popular Amiga games magazine") at the time. He describes the period as "an extended episode of 'Press Gang', though with a million geeky Dexter Fletchers and no Julia Zimbabwes. Kids playing *Sensible Soccer* or *Speedball 2* for a fortnight, before thinking about what to put in the next issue. It astonished me that companies such as EMAP and Future would essentially place huge financial responsibility in the arms of inexperienced (in publishing terms) gamers with, in our case, very little managerial guidance in terms of how the magazine should progress."

Paul Davies, now a freelance game journalist, who was working on EMAP's official Nintendo magazine, 'Nintendo Magazine System' at the time, concurs, "Everyone was reviewing games from imported Japanese or American games, and crediting the supplier. Overseas news from Japan and the US was lifted from Japanese mags like 'Weekly Famitsu' and US mags like 'EGM'. It was every man for himself, and some of the older 'personalities' were still helping each other out when it came to exclusive UK-oriented reviews, competitions, and so on. It was a time of transition, to be polite about it."

Rock 'n' roll

Perhaps it's because of this that it was also a period that was bursting with potential. "You have to remember that this was the moment when videogames were suddenly the new rock 'n' roll," argues Carey. "Sony was putting them into nightclubs, Sega was throwing money around on marketing like it was going out of fashion (though in fact the reverse was true) and any hot new act that wanted to signal cool had to know their videogame stuff."

And the exponentially improving technology seemed unstoppable. "On paper, there were systems that threatened to offer all the sophistication we'd been promised by The Future," agrees Byron. "The CD-ROM, for example, implied far more than it ever delivered – but at the time, we were astonished by *Rebel Assault* and *The Seventh Guest*'s undeniably impressive eye candy." Which perhaps explains **Edge**'s decision to give quite



so much coverage to *Microcosm* ("I remember being a little concerned about *Microcosm* getting so much coverage," recalls Brookes, with the benefit of hindsight).

Future Publishing, the birthplace of **Edge**, was itself an embodiment of this turbulent slice of videogame history. "It was a pretty exciting time," relates Brookes. "There was rapid expansion due to the 16bit boom and there was a feeling that Future was unstoppable. Personally, I felt there was a warm family vibe at Future at that time – it was quite innocent. I can't believe that we didn't have internet access for the first two years of **Edge**. I remember receiving the initial specs for the PlayStation and Saturn via fax from our 'Frenchman in Japan', Nicolas di Costanzo. I think he must have copied them out of 'Weekly Famitsu' – and yet no other games magazines reported on this."

Matt Williams has similar memories. "Future was privately owned and a lot smaller, which meant we had a direct line to the boss [Greg Ingham, then Future's managing director, now chief executive] – who had a conscience. Obviously it was about making a living, but it was all about believing in the magazines, because his background was as a videogame journalist anyway. Everybody knew everybody else and it was quite tight-knit, and the videogame industry was just overflowing with potential. The technology we have now to produce the magazines is so advanced compared with what we had then; it was being produced to film, there was no digital workflow. Interestingly though that probably made us think more about what we were producing."

What they were producing was, according to Carey, "the result of a lot of conversations, many of them in the pub. Believe it or not, **Edge** was never about making money – I distinctly remember being told that very explicitly by Greg Ingham. It was about making something unbelievably, uncompromisingly brilliant. Future at the time was pretty no-nonsense in its launching; we didn't go in for focus groups or any of that nonsense. With **Edge**, in particular, we had the feeling that we were going to produce a magazine that we loved, and that the readers would respect and appreciate. It's such a cliché now but at the time it seemed fresh: if you build it, they will come."

"**Edge** was never about making money – I was told that very explicitly by Greg Ingham. It was about making something unbelievably, uncompromisingly brilliant"

And build it they did. When Future Publishing had sold 'ACE' magazine to EMAP some years earlier, the terms of the deal prohibited the company from entering the multiformat market with a new launch for a certain period of time. According to Jarratt, it was the end of that period that kicked off the conception process. "When the agreement between Future and EMAP allowed us to enter the multiformat market again, following the sale of 'ACE', Greg Ingham and Steve Carey asked me if I wanted to launch one and I was really keen. I figured that if I was still heavily into videogames at the age of, er, approaching 30, then there'd be others like me. At that time, I was a great fan of a US mag called 'Cinefex', which is all about movie special effects. That was sort of the inspiration for a mag which went into more depth in terms of how games are made, the technical aspects, development issues – basically a mag that treated games as a serious work. It came together pretty quickly, and though the initial idea was mine, credit has to go to Jason Brookes who really helped flesh it out and bring in the import/Japanese/hardcore culture."

Or, as Brookes describes it, "Stevie J knew what he was doing. At that point games were in an awkward development stage – graphics, and primarily FMV, were a huge distraction from gameplay. But because prerendered 3D graphics were so new and interesting, we could get away with it. Like all of us, Stevie J was a big geek. He had this big list of technically slanted features that included as much cutting edge hi-fi and home cinema stuff as possible. He loved all that. I was responsible for selecting a lot of the games for inclusion, and I think he hired me because he wanted someone keeping track of all the arcade and Japanese developments."

If that makes the creation process sound suspiciously close to improvisation compared to the focus-grouped market opportunities that characterise today's magazine publishing industry, it's probably because it was. Initially it involved creating a 16-page dummy copy of the magazine, in order to crystallise the design and type of content that would appear in the finished product, but that's as regimented as it got.

"We just made it up as we went along," reveals Jarratt. "The only approval process was between us and the publisher, Steve Carey. I had the privilege of working with Matt Williams





Edge's launch editor Steve Jarratt took inspiration from film effects magazine, 'Cinefex'

who is a great designer and our ideas just meshed – the sort of clinical tone, together with his clean, black and white design." Williams confirms this impression of a meeting of minds: "It was one of the easiest launches I've ever done," he states. "It just seemed to be right for the time and Steve and I felt really plugged in."

Still, it wasn't entirely without problems: "Finding the right staff, trying to get Brookesy to hand in his copy on time, me having no real experience of editing a mag of this type, people not 'getting' it, struggling with deadlines," is how Jarratt recalls them. "You know, the usual." And, as per usual, they were overcome.

The result was something vibrant and new; something that captured the zeitgeist of that aspirant moment, and something that stood out from all the other videogame magazines on the news-stand. "As it transpired it was launched right on the cusp of the explosion of the videogame industry into a million dollar business," relates Williams, who was largely responsible for the magazine's stand-out design. A high cover price allowed the magazine to be printed on the most expensive paper available, an attitude to presentation that extended to every part of the magazine. "It was most celebrated for its high design and production values," recalls Brookes. "We always went the extra mile to make things look nice – in the early days that meant taking photo transparencies instead of screen grabs when we wanted to do justice to a game's graphics. Matt Williams understood typography and pacing really well – in particular, the use of 'white space'. Of course, that meant that fans of traditional 'packed' mags couldn't appreciate it – 'What a complete waste of space!' they'd say. But we also had more information than any other mag out there. I think it seriously upped the ante. There was just so much information to get your teeth into, and a nice balance between celebrating gaming's history via things like retroview, and anticipating its future."

Perhaps controversially for the time, **Edge** was launched in a sealed, opaque bag – preventing would-be readers from sampling a copy at the newsagents. And the launch was accompanied by a marketing campaign that ostensibly appeared to discourage readers. "As well as a strong team we had a pretty visionary publisher in Steve Carey," discloses Brookes. "He was bright, erudite and, if I remember correctly, a big bully. But I did admire the vision he had for **Edge** – an authoritative and damn stylish videogame magazine. I think he came up with the guerilla-style marketing – the black bag, the billboard ads, and apparently, subliminal messages masquerading as personal ads in London weeklies. There was an arrogance at play even then."

Indeed, Carey describes this arrogant vision as, "Instead of the old 'New York Times' tag of 'All The News That's Fit to Print' it was going to be "Only If We Say It Matters'." But this apparent arrogance was quite a carefully cultured one. "Another very perverse thing we did was to severely restrict the availability of the magazine at launch," continues Carey. "Normally you try and get a new magazine out everywhere so it can be seen and sampled. Not **Edge**. I think we put it in only one in 15 of the nation's newsagents. On the first day it came out, I was fielding calls from desperate, desperate types – I remember in particular one guy who'd been into dozens of places looking for it. He was practically in tears. I think I may even have popped a copy into the post for him. I hope he's still reading: he really made my day, I can tell you."

"Normally you try and get a new magazine out everywhere so it can be seen and sampled. Not **Edge**. I think we put it in only one in 15 of the nation's newsagents"

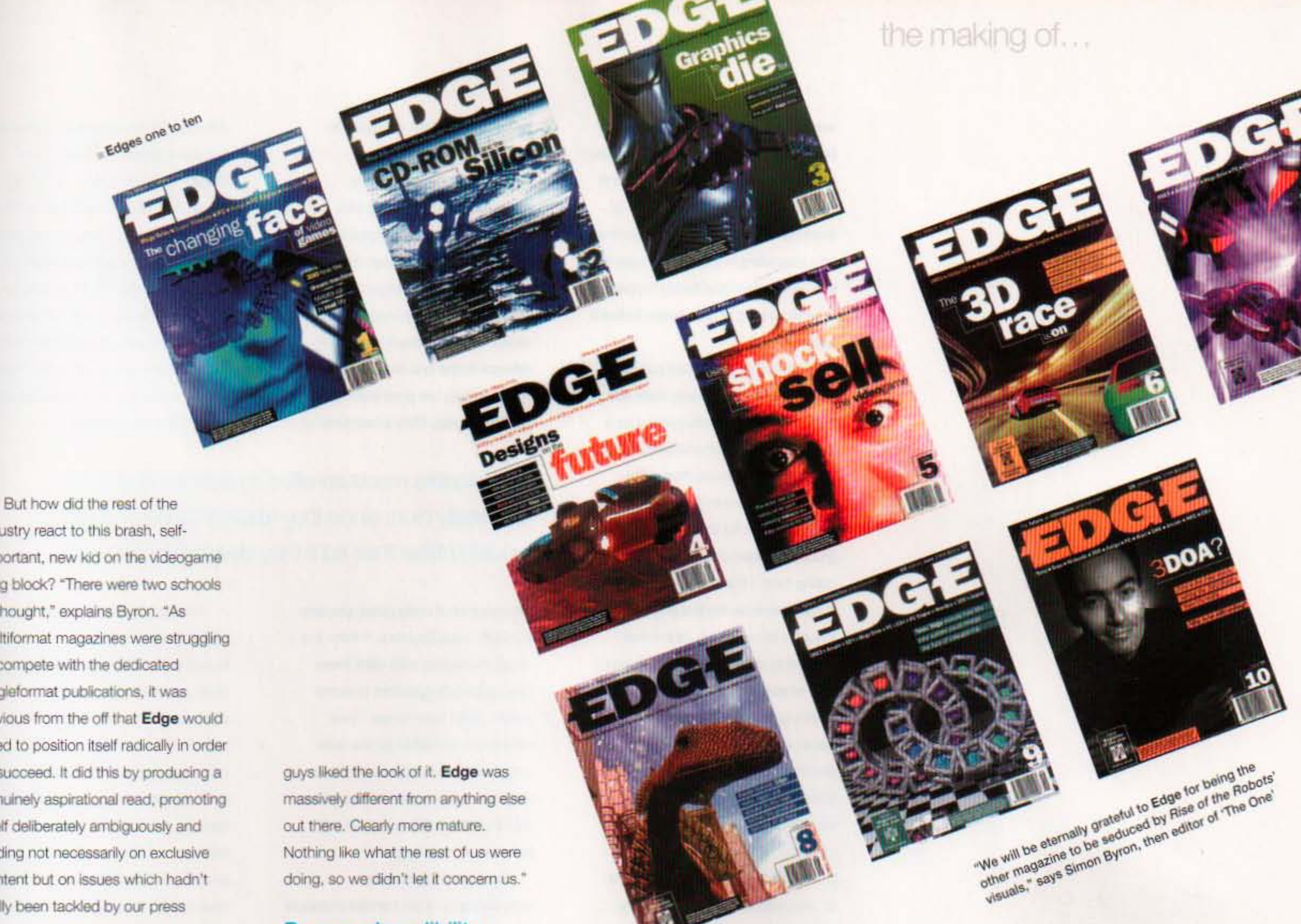
"The reason for doing it was to generate myth and mystique, and brand creation," explains Williams. "At the time, brand creation wasn't a concept that really existed, but we wanted to create an impression that the magazine was essential."

"The whole idea of the overprinted sealed bag and the 'It's not for everyone' routine was to build up a mystique," agrees Carey. "We knew we had the hardest of the hardcore videogames players reading our other mags, and we knew they were smart enough to notice what was going on. They were the opinion formers, and if we could catch their attention, others would come along for the ride."



pages from E0, the 'dummy' issue

Datastream was included to indulge publisher, Steve Carey, "It was nicked, holus bolus, from something the 'Guardian' was running at the time," he says



Edges one to ten

"We will be eternally grateful to Edge for being the other magazine to be seduced by *Rise of the Robots*' visuals," says Simon Byron, then editor of 'The One'

But how did the rest of the industry react to this brash, self-important, new kid on the videogame mag block? "There were two schools of thought," explains Byron. "As multiformat magazines were struggling to compete with the dedicated singleformat publications, it was obvious from the off that **Edge** would need to position itself radically in order to succeed. It did this by producing a genuinely aspirational read, promoting itself deliberately ambiguously and trading not necessarily on exclusive content but on issues which hadn't really been tackled by our press before. The second school of thought is much more succinct: we thought it was a bit up its own arse."

On balance, that second point of view was probably the predominant one among **Edge**'s competitors. "The thing that confused us all initially was how eager it was to break the mould," Byron continues. "It was sold in a sealed bag, for starters – how we laughed when we realised no one would buy it when its contents could not be skimmed in Smiths. That wasn't the case, of course; **Edge** traded superbly on this elitist reputation. Not knowing what was in it, merely reinforced the need to purchase."

Paul Davies recalls a similarly nonplussed response from his colleagues. "Of course all the senior people within EMAP were dismissive of it, this expensive mag that came in a sealed bag. But it was clear that it had its own agenda, and all the design guys liked the look of it. **Edge** was massively different from anything else out there. Clearly more mature. Nothing like what the rest of us were doing, so we didn't let it concern us."

Damaged credibility

This was not an attitude that lasted for long, however. "When we started to see interviews with some very important people in there, and when we started to see coverage of games in development that we felt we should be covering, that's when we started to take notice," continues Davies. "The whole industry-oriented approach was paying off, and we didn't see it coming. We weren't used to arranging appointments with people like Howard Lincoln, or Trip Hawkins. Actually we didn't care about Trip Hawkins, but when **Edge** was showing cool *Donkey Kong* renders we were straight on the phone to Rare, crying, and being told, 'Well, you didn't ask. Anyway, it's much too early for you.' So we felt that our credibility as an official source was being hurt."

Byron recounts a similar tale, "We immediately went to our publisher and demanded we had access to spot varnishing. And a design team that didn't rely on symmetrical grids and primary colours. I think we also got a bit fed up with the industry reaction – which was universally positive, resulting in all those damned InDin Magazine of the Year Awards."

Indeed from the very outset of the magazine's life, it was enormously well received by the videogame industry. Which wasn't without its downsides. "Unfortunately every marketing manager in every crap games company was instructed by their boss to get their games into **Edge**," explains Brookes. "So we often got duped – as with (cough) *Rise of the Robots*. Great cover though." Still, for every *Rise of the Robots*, there was a genuinely exclusive report enabled by the videogame industry's desire to see itself in the pages of **Edge**. "The mag

was so highly regarded that I'd often find myself as the only journalist invited to NDA-protected presentations and private demos," he continues. "For example Steve Jarratt and I were the only journalists in the world to see the pre-production PlayStation hardware up and running almost a year before it came out."

Part of this favour and patronage was because the industry itself was as keen to reposition videogames as a respectable form of entertainment as **Edge** was. "It was so heartily welcomed by the industry; it really opened doors for the rest of the group," explains Williams. "It was a calling card. I think it had such an impact because the industry wanted to justify its existence. I think they wanted to see themselves in it, and it was where you go to first to find out what's going on in videogames. It became a focal point for the industry, and the letters were really good, and when it evolved into an outlet for recruitment advertising, developers made an effort to design adverts to look really nice, which shows some of the mag's influence, since they knew that we probably wouldn't take their ad if they designed a shit one."

The evolution of **Edge**'s recruitment section is just one example of how the magazine has developed to encompass the seismic changes that have shaped the videogame industry over the past ten years. The magazine today is very different to the one that launched in 1993. "Initially we gave too much space to dodgy FMV adventures at the expense of really good, playable 2D stuff," says Brookes. "I think the mag's increasing retro slant these days acknowledges that to some extent. And I have to say, I was probably responsible for the over-concentration on specifications in the early days. I couldn't give a crap about stuff like that today – it's all become so meaningless."

As a testament to the achievements of the handful of people who put that first issue together, it's worth noting that, of the magazines around a decade ago, only 'C&VG', 'Official Nintendo Magazine', 'GamesMaster' and 'PC Gamer' remain. A sister magazine to **Edge**, 'NextGen', was launched in the US in January 1995 but closed its doors in January 2001 having won praise from various quarters, including 'Time' magazine, 'USA Today', 'The Wall Street Journal' and ABC News. "It's certainly true that many people dislike **Edge** and its attitude and influence," concludes Byron. "But had it never launched, I do think that the standards of specialist press journalism would have remained as poor as they were when I was doing it." Which certainly looks like a compliment.

"Developers made an effort to design adverts to look really nice, since they knew that we probably wouldn't take their ad if they designed a shit one"

Having gone on to bigger and better things, the members of the launch editorial team that **Edge** spoke to are justifiably proud of their achievement. "When I see it on news-stands here in Australia, I still feel immensely proud that I played a part in it," declares Carey, "even though that was sometime in the last millennium. How could you not feel proud? Just last week I suddenly won new respect and admiration from an IT lawyer down here in Australia, because I played a part in the launch of **Edge**."

Brookes also looks back on the period with satisfaction, "It put a traditionally maligned pastime into a cooler perspective. It educated people rather than feeding them a diet of hype. And perhaps best of all, it really started to question why we should be accepting games of such a pitiful standard – back then, 90 per cent of games were unplayable."

But perhaps the last words ought to be left to the magazine's launch editor, "I wanted to make a mag that catered for serious, passionate gamers," finishes Jarratt. "A magazine that would outlive the various hardware generations; that was a showcase for the very best that the industry had to offer; and a mag that sold about 100,000 copies a month with loads of advertising. Well, three out of four..."



Covers that never were: a (limited) selection

"I don't think anyone would argue with me when I say I was probably the least organised editor in Future's history" says Brookes. "But that did mean we made some killer issues by cramming in stuff at the last minute."



Tales from the Edge

A round-up of some of the stories that weren't fit to print

No animals were hurt in the production of this cover
The high production values that go into **Edge**'s covers are the work of an art department that operates like a well-oiled machine. But in ten years, there has been the odd occasion where things haven't quite gone according to plan, as **Edge**'s erstwhile art editor, **Terry Stokes**, explains. "On one occasion we decided to use a fox on the cover, and have it wearing flying goggles, with the *Star Fox* game reflected on them, as if it was playing the game. I briefed our photographer, and over the next couple of weeks he let me know that he'd found a toy shop in Birmingham that supplied cuddly toys, and an antiques market to get hold of some flying goggles. Things were all going to plan. When I went to the studio I was met by a very pleased looking photographer. And there it was. It looked like a cross-eyed Roland the Rat complete with flying goggles, hat and scarf. I was speechless. It was okay though, because our photographer had a back up plan...

"The next thing I knew, I was stood in front of a thawing fox that had been in our photographer's freezer for the last two days, complete with goggles, hat, scarf and a bullet-hole from where it had been shot in the head. It turned out that he'd asked his cousin, who was a hunter, if he happened to have a real-life fox that could be used for the photo shoot. While our photographer was cracking its limbs in an attempt to make it look like the fox was holding a joypad I had to explain we wouldn't be able to use it..."

We could be heroes
Edge magazine has provided some unique opportunities for its staff to meet their heroes. For Matt Williams, those heroes were Malcolm Garrett and Peter Saville, who designed the 'Never Mind the Bollocks' cover. "They were like gods when I was at college. But when Malcolm Garrett wrote a book called 'The Hyperspace Lexicon' about multimedia and interactivity, and the magazine was featured in the book, I eventually got to meet him and we chatted about **Edge**, which was really cool."

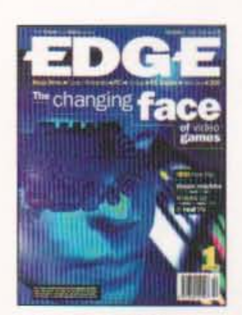
For Jason Brookes it was Shigeru Miyamoto, "I was once at a private CES party on a river in downtown Chicago with a load of people from Rare, Alias and Nintendo. There were no other journos there so I spent most of the night sitting under the stars with Miyamoto-san smoking all his ciggies. The poor guy probably just wanted some peace."

And for Paul Davies, working on 'NMS' at the time, it was Jason Brookes, "At Space World 1995 I remember seeing Jason Brookes casually chatting with Miyamoto and thinking 'how the... what the... ?!' and being obsessed with Jason's incredible ligging prowess ever since. In fact, I've got a better one: the time that Jason went to the African Rally with Mizuguchi from Sega. Or maybe I just imagined that... My trophies at the time were books about *Street Fighter* costing me £30 from the Japan Centre. Jason's were Kutaragi-san's business card... before he invented PlayStation probably. Maybe it's about time I dropped this obsession with Brookes!"

The One and only magazine of the year
Edge wasn't welcomed in all quarters when it launched ten years ago. In a brazen display of the sort of self-promotional skills that were eventually to earn him **Edge**'s 'press release of the year' award in 2002, Simon Byron, then editor of 'The One' decided to take a stand. "The industry's sycophancy when it came to the press's goody-two-shoes new boy did rankle. Plus, it was always banging on about its successes in this award and that award; so I decided to poke a little fun at it. We ran a cover flash which declared: "Magazine of the Year – See Inside!" Sure enough, in the news pages, we reported briefly on **Edge**'s inevitable triumph at the InDin. The implication, obviously, was that we'd won Magazine of the Year, as we should have. It was a bit cheeky, but all good-humoured. We heard that the **Edge** boys took it in the spirit it was intended. 'Amiga Action', however, threatened to take us to court if we ever tried 'passing off' again. We told them to pass off themselves." Indeed it's an episode that stuck with Steve Carey, **Edge**'s launch publisher. His reaction? "Cheeky bastards."

reload

Examining gaming history from **Edge**'s perspective, ten years ago this month



Issue 01, October 1993

The history of The Future of Videogaming makes for bittersweet reading. **Edge** launched with features on the CD-32, the Jaguar, and the 3DO, plus sidebars on the Saturn and the FM Towns Marty. While healthily sceptical about the prospects of some of the hardware, **Edge** displayed boundless enthusiasm about the potential for FMV that the new 12cm CD format offered.

A feature on the making of Microcosm focused substantially on its "stunning" 400 seconds of CD film footage (although Reset is unconvinced by its designers' quality assurance: "*Microcosm* probably contains more computer graphics than any film ever made! And it was done in the same time with less people!") **Edge** doesn't overlook the passive nature of the format, of course, sternly admonishing designers to involve, rather than 'merely' entertain.

The years may not have been kind to such novelties as *Voyeur* – the CD-i's first interactive movie, 'starring' Robert Culp and Grace Zabrinksi – but other features don't date **Edge** quite so much. Tabloid hysteria about videogame addiction? Sega unveiling an online strategy? A disappointing *Mortal Kombat* game? Plus ça change…

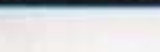
Testscreen intro, however, sees **Edge** already lamenting the prevalence of sequels and remakes among the new releases of the day: "Not exactly state of the art, but for unadulterated gameplaying excellence, they can't be beaten. Nostalgia, eh?" Nostalgia, eh?



DID EDGE REALLY SAY THAT?
"How did you make the helicopters shiny?" **Edge** lays the foundations for its trademark style of informed, incisive and investigative interviews

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?
"Whenever you get a big jump in performance, half a million people will buy it no matter what you do in terms of support," Trip Hawkins unveils his innovative 3DO launch strategy to a sceptical **Edge**

TESTSCREENS AND RATINGS:
Street Fighter II Turbo (SNES, 9/10); *Mortal Kombat* (SNES, 6/10); *Slipheed* (Mega-CD, 7/10); *Rainbow Islands* (PC Engine CD, 7/10); *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* (SNES, 6/10); *Lands of Lore* (PC, 8/10); *Mario Collection* (SNES, 8/10); *First Samurai* (SNES, 5/10); *Yo Joe* (Amiga, 8/10); *Rocket Knight* (Mega Drive, 7/10); *Pinball Dreams* (PC, 8/10); *Sunset Riders* (SNES, 7/10); *Viewpoint* (Neo Geo, 7/10); *Ecco the Dolphin* (Mega-CD, 8/10); *Inca* (CD-i, 7/10)



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1. Chris Evans helps jinx the CD-32 2. The often forgotten FM Towns Marty 3. Living the future with **Edge**'s first competition prize 4. Psygnosis' Chris Moore in his costume for *Microcosm*'s FMV intro 5. "The ultimate beat 'em up." Ten years on and *SFII Turbo* still makes **Edge**'s list. 6. Is it just **Edge**, or does Trip Hawkins look terrified? 7. *Rise of the Robots*: "With graphics like this, who needs gameplay?" 8. Crystal Dynamics' founders promise basic cinematography and no window dressing. Poor Lara. 9. Not one, not two but 25,940 polygons per ship in *Slipheed* 10. *Microcosm*'s admittedly very shiny helicopters



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It's a truism of magazine production that the quality of a magazine can be judged by the quality of its letters pages. Over the past ten years, **Edge**'s readers have provided one of the most consistently entertaining parts of the magazine. Here, then, is a summary of the highpoints (and lowpoints).

Congratulations on producing such an excellent magazine! This sort of publication has been a long time coming, with the newsagents' shelves crammed full of magazines which seem to be written by children for children.
Stephen Brealey, E2

As I see it, we are on the brink of the greatest advancement in our industry. I cannot recall such enthusiasm, caution, disappointment and general ignorance all rolled into one ever before. Come on software publishers, it seems as though you are blaming us – the consumers – for the apparent flop of CD technology. Take a step back and then reconsider. Ever since the dawn of the potential of CD gaming we have been promised cheaper, better quality products. But so far, where are they?

It's not that good games are no longer being produced. Rather, the software giants are running scared from a sign saying 'Vacancies – CD bandwagon, space still available'. If floppy disks are piratable, STOP PRODUCING THEM! and invest in CD technology and CD games before you are left behind.
James Grant, E2

Your 'Game Over' feature argued that as seemingly more and more new games fall into specific styles of genres, the development of ground-breaking games is drying up. "The amount of real innovation in the industry is decreasing year by year," you gloomily conclude. I disagree, and I think there are a couple of significant points in this debate that you fail to mention here.

Firstly, I believe that the constant churning out of formulaic established genre games serves a useful purpose. Just take a look at what's happened over the last three or four years; the period in which you claim this stagnation has reached crisis level. Since the arrival on the scene of Sega and Nintendo's consoles, the videogame market has exploded through the roof. It's made it into the big time.

Is this coincidence? Of course not. Consoles have taken videogames from the small-time hobby pursuit of a minority to big business, larger than the Compact Disc industry. Seemingly overnight, Sega and Nintendo knocked down all the barriers of techno-fear and stigma that had previously kept the home computer industry anchored in the backwaters of small-time.

Their consoles are cheap, simple to plug in, easy to understand and – as part and parcel of this approach – it's bloody obvious how to play the games. The beat 'em ups, drive 'em ups and shoot 'em ups that you dismiss as stagnating the market are the very same games that are providing entry-level appeal to newcomers.

I'm not for one minute going to argue that *Sonic* on the Mega Drive is a 'better' game than *Ultima Underworld* on the PC, but it's obvious which game is going to sell the idea of videogames to the average guy on the street. It's these games that provide the first tentative step into the world of videogames for a whole new generation, a generation who will – in time – progress to becoming more discerning cart buyers or PC owners, or **Edge** readers and 3DO owners.
Neil West, E3

I can't understand why people are talking about interactive movies, because it will never happen. A film is a linear story and will always remain so. The sooner the softies and everyone else realise this the better, because then maybe the huge potential of CD-ROM as a format can start to be used properly. CD games will be no different from games today except developers will not have to worry about memory and disk space, and games will only be limited by imagination.
A Lang, E5

Recently I borrowed a book from my local library entitled 'Computer Games'. It was printed in 1980, and as well as including tips for the latest games, such as *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders* and *Missile Command*, it gave an interesting insight into what the author thought computer games would be like in ten years' time (1990). It was generally very accurate – "home television games with picture-quality graphics, colour handheld games with interchangeable cartridges, fourplayer games and digitised speech being examples.

One of the other points was: "By the year 200[0] it will be possible to play computer games agains[t] people living in other towns and cities, through th[e] use of an attachment for your home television console." I think PC-based modem games have been around since the mid-'80s – am I right? However, the book was 15 years out of date on the subject of modems.

The point is that videogames seem to be constantly getting better, with flashier graphics an[d] more memory all the time. I recently read an interview in which the boss of Sega Europe claimed that it wouldn't be too long until games appeared which weren't controlled by your hands but your mind. Isn't this taking things a bit too far
Matthew Withers, E8

Every time a spanking new piece of hardware is announced, you go potty over it. The[n] as soon as something else is proclaimed, you almost immediately switch your allegiance to the new machine.

One example of this is the 3DO. In the first fe[w] issues you went mad over it. Then the Jaguar wa[s] announced, and as far as **Edge** was concerned the 3DO was dead. No sooner had the PS-X and Saturn been revealed than you started drooling about them, and the Jaguar was suddenly defun[ct]. I'm willing to bet that after Saturn and PlayStation have appeared, you will lose interest in them and start touting the Ultra 64.

When is **Edge** going to stop becoming seduc[ed]

"The beat 'em ups, drive 'em ups and shoot 'em ups that you dismiss as stagnating the market are the very same games that are providing entry-level appeal to newcomers"



Bullfrog's Glenn Corpes, now at Lost Toys, offered *Magic Carpet* to back up his argument for the superiority of C over assembly back in **E**19

by desirable new systems and start giving existing machines a fair chance?
Simon Grierson, E12

Here are some basic facts about the differences between programming in pure assembly language and C.
Fact 1: painstakingly coded assembly language is almost always faster than the equivalent C program.
Fact 2: anything that can be programmed in C can be programmed in assembly.
Fact 3: championing the use of pure assembly language earns you loads of street cred from trainspotter types who then write to **Edge** to show how well informed they are.
Fact 4: assembly isn't worth the hassle.

It is possible that if you dug out an eight-year-old Amiga C compiler and started writing C as if it were BASIC your code could be ten times slower than hand-coded assembler, but a modern optimising C compiler such as Watcom 10 (the nearest thing to an industry standard on the PC) produces code that is at worst 50 per cent slower than the equivalent assembly code and at best slightly faster! Jon Ritman, Noel Wallace and the anoraks are probably jumping up and down shouting, "bollocks", but here's why...

Decent compilers can speed up code by using tricks like 'pipelining' (allowing certain instructions to execute simultaneously by placing them in strange unreadable orders), load-store models (simple instructions work faster, making the code larger but faster and harder to follow) and code alignment (re-ordering instructions so the processor can read them faster). Admittedly, an assembly coder could handle these considerations while simultaneously remembering which variable is in which register, and solve any programming problem and maybe only take about four times longer than a C programmer, but the real problem is that the assembler zealot would probably be coding up the first algorithm he could think of, while a C programmer could be using his brain to think of more elegant, faster and/or smaller solutions. Then there's the debugging. The assembly will be at least twice the size of the C and immeasurably less readable.

Don't assume that I don't know what I'm talking about. I wrote the engines for three pure assembler games – *Populous*, *Powermonger* and *Populous II* – and convincing myself that assembler is not worth the hassle has been a long process. *Magic Carpet* is entirely written in C except for my polygon routine and about 200 lines of other graphics code which are highly optimised assembler. While the game is running it spends 96 per cent of its time in these routines. If Bullfrog decided to convert the 70,000+ lines of C code to 140,000+ lines of assembly for the sake of a 20–30 per cent speed increase on the remaining four per cent of the runtime, the best we could hope for would be a one per cent overall speed increase, a couple of debugging suicides and a 1999 release date!
Glenn Corpes, Head of R&D, Bullfrog, E19

Are the PlayStation and Saturn (at the equivalent of £290) really massmarket products? Since the yen seems unshakeably strong against the pound and the dollar, what realistic chance do Sony and Sega have of establishing a global massmarket userbase?

Sega should have stuck with the aborted Jupiter product, made it compatible with the Mega-CD and scrapped Saturn and 32X. Impressive as the PlayStation is, Sony could have made it cartridge based for £100, with games at around £50. When Nintendo's Ultra 64 arrives at $250 (£157) it will be competing directly with the 32X, Saturn and PlayStation. Although cartridge games are expensive, it just wouldn't make any sense for Nintendo to price its software above the level of present SNES cartridges. It may also be worth pointing out that even *Virtua Fighter* on Saturn CD costs the equivalent of £50. What game are Sega and Sony playing with the consumer?
Iqbal Shaikh, E23

For the last three months I've noticed a bias in your magazine towards Sony's PlayStation. In **E**25 your lead story was about the development of the 'Saturn 2'. We were told that the machine is being developed due to shortfalls in the technology used in the Saturn, that "although Sega is making great efforts to improve the quality of the Saturn's 3D, the system may find it tough going in 1996," and that Sega has "conceded internally the Saturn will face tough competition from the PlayStation and will not be able to match the onslaught from the Ultra 64 in 1996." The whole tone of the story was that Sega was panicking, and developing a new machine prematurely. In fact, it was a perfect advert for the PlayStation, and no mention was made of the fact that Sony, too, is working on a new version of the PlayStation.

But what's this I see? An advert for the official PlayStation magazine from Future, to be launched this October. Could this explain the team's enthusiasm towards the PlayStation at the expense of its major competitor?
James Reader, E27

I am sick and tired of hearing about Shigeru Miyamoto! When will the press wake up and realise he is a *producer*! He is not a games designer, an artist, or a programmer. He is a producer, yet the press, time and time again, gives him the credit for nearly all of Nintendo's success.

Mr Miyamoto is an awesome producer, there is little doubt about that. No other game producer has as many hit titles, but a producer is not the creative force behind a game. It's the artists, programmers and musicians that make a game.
Gregg Tavares, E32

The games industry is at a crossroads. The technology is at last capable of producing movie-like results, and developers are being courted by giant entertainment conglomerates, but some people are confusing this with their own abilities and their customers' expectations.

"Mr Miyamoto is an awesome producer, but a producer is not the creative force behind a game. It's the artists, programmers and musicians that make a game"





Super Mario 64? What a load of rubbish! Still, good job Jeff Minter didn't take **Edge**'s advice or we'd never have seen the likes of *Tempest 3000*

Wing Commander IV (there are others, but this is an obvious example) is placing itself head-to-head against real movies, but people can see good real movies for a few quid on a 40-foot screen with a big surround-sound system, or for a similar price from the local video store. Why would they pay £60 for the privilege?

We sell gameplay and no amount of artwork can substitute for a well-crafted game. However, we cannot ignore the legacy of Hollywood totally. They have many years of experience that we can and should be learning from. They have the ability to tell a story and immerse the viewer using the subtleties of lighting, camera movement, sound and character. Personally I have seen too many cut-scenes in games which suffer from poor lighting, jarring shot construction, grim animation, and too much waving the camera around just because they can – or worse, to show off a nice piece of modelling.

We aren't Hollywood, and shouldn't try to be, but given that intros and cut-scenes are probably here to stay it is our duty as developers to make them look as good as possible within the constraints we all work under.

Drew Northcott, Microprose, E34

The joke is over. Stop publishing this idiot known as Chris Crawford. When was the last time he published anything worthwhile? *Balance of Power*? Nice try! I'd rather a hideous virus take over my machine than install that piece of crap! This man has no worthy contributions to make to the gaming industry. Chris, if you're out there, come back to us babe. Or better yet, stop mourning the fact that you have never had a best-seller and stop dissing those who have.

Edge should fill its pages with qualified developers and not this blow-hard, egocentric, self-proclaimed game guru. I mean, let's face it, the Atari 2600 has had better games published in the last ten years than this guy has – and there haven't been any. Besides, what does this guy *really* know about next-generation gaming? If **Edge** thinks he's a respected figure in the gaming community, you're dead wrong.

Mike Nichols, Boss Game Studios, E34

Ten out of ten for *Mario 64*... so it's the perfect game then? I remember quotes like "six out of ten is still an above-average game." I just don't see that any game can be perfect, or be *so* good that it warrants a perfect score. Did you really think about the grade or are you just trying to recreate the hype that accompanied the PlayStation and Saturn? Ask yourselves these questions when justifying this perfect mark: will everybody love this game? Will you be playing the game forever? Is the difficulty curve so perfectly set so that even the worst gamesplayer will develop with the game and complete it? Is it worth the money (**Edge** may get games for free but the rest of us don't)? Will it, at the very least, live up to everyone's expectations and in most cases surpass them? Will no other game ever better it? Will you stop playing all other games in the genre due to its perfect nature? Will you stop playing all other games just because they're not *Mario 64*?

In giving a game a perfect mark you forgo any excuse that 'this is just our opinion' as to deserve this grade the game must be liked by all. Now, I've seen *Mario* running and yes it does look nice but my jaw didn't hit the floor. To be honest I've always found *Mario* games too repetitive – will this be any better? In a year or so, who knows, I may write back and say what a life-changing event *Mario 64* was, but I doubt it. The perfect game does not exist! Stop thinking you know it all, and start giving us the grown-up attitude that **Edge** started with.

Sam Maxwell, E37

In E38 you mentioned that Jeff Minter and Richard Miller are working on a new Atari chip. Then you end the article with the sentence: "Don't they ever give up?" If Nolan Bushnell had your ignorant attitude he would have given up after *Computer Space*. You wouldn't have a magazine.

Thomas Holzer, E40

UK gamers have had to wait about six months after everyone else for the N64. When it does arrive, it costs more than anywhere else in the world. There are only three games available. The screen display is crippled with borders and it only has an RF lead with mono sound (does Nintendo still think everyone in the UK has old-fashioned wooden tellies?). The final kick in the teeth: it goes and cuts the price by £100 after tw months! I know this is the norm in the business, but after only two months? This is a cheap short-term strategy and not worth the £200,000 or so profit that has initially been made. Nintendo is definitely going to have to spend more than that t buy back the loyalty of UK gamers.

Gary Lee, E46

I am always reading in **Edge** that the most important thing about a game is gameplay. So wh is this not reflected in your recruitment section? While there are hundreds of handsomely paid positions for 3D programmers, Softimage gurus etc, there are only a handful of (relatively) poorly paid places for the supposedly most important jo of all – the game designer.

I am at university on a renowned computer animation course, and while most of my peers are concerned with rendering times, I am not. I am far more interested in the whole concept behind a game, but I don't see any real opportunities for a graduate that isn't a master at C/C++. I am thinking of getting a PC and Net Yaroze just to give myself a chance, and am working hard to learn C, as well as developing game ideas. Is this the way to go? Have I a chan when I leave university, or have all the games designers already been found?

Jack Griffin, E55

The nuMedia section has lost its way. think the music reviews suck – they're just very o of place and the music is very specialist, to the point of being obscure.

Neil Aubin, E56

> "To be honest I've always found Mario games too repetitive. In a year or so, who knows, I may write back and say what a life-changing event Mario 64 was, but I doubt it"



Among its other significant achievements, *Elite* can proudly claim to have inspired the most anal-retentive email ever received by **Edge** magazine

Lastly, please could you print my letter, or at least part of it, as it has always been my ambition to have my name appear in **Edge**.
Paul Powell, E57

After many years of reading **Edge** I've been forced to comment on a recent issue, having resisted the best debates: Nintendo versus Sega, PlayStation versus Sega and now PlayStation versus Nintendo, the marking scheme (10/10 = 100 per cent?), the extras/incentives debate (more/less posters/CDs). I've even held back when some of my preferred articles were removed for lesser readings (eg Q&A out, nuMedia nonsense in).

What has finally broken my silence is the double May 1998 issue. Why? For collectors and other people alike, this can only be seen as a blatant attempt to increase circulation. If you really wished to supply extra value, you could have made one of those (useless) posters again, or placed the second picture on a fold-out. The content of both versions was identical – correct me if I'm wrong. I was forced to buy both (okay, 'forced' is not the correct term, but it's like offering an England fan two sets of tickets to the World Cup finals). My fear is that if this gimmick is successful, **Edge** will continue such trickery while letting the standard of the publication decline.
Xover, E59

Let me tell you a story. It was the start of the month and I bought a copy of **Edge** (as usual) and (as usual) I read it cover to cover. The 15th rolled along and what did I see but another copy of **Edge**. Different cover, must be a different issue, right? So – like always – I bought it there and then. It was not until I got it home that I realised it was the same magazine.

I hope you are happy with the extra £3.50 that you made out of me. I assure you that if you try something like this again it will be the last £3.50 that you get out of me, too.
Chris McCreadie, E60

I have come to the conclusion that **Edge** either a) hates women, b) is homosexual or c) has no dick.
Thomas Holzer (again), E60

I hope I'm not the first person to notice this – and I hope for Sega's sake it's too obvious to be true – but the timing of new next-gen consoles seems to follow the same pattern it did a few years back. Sega comes out first with its amazing console, comes up with some decent games and a few natty add-ons like a modem, and actually does quite well for a while. Sony hides everything and releases its machine a few months later, blowing Sega away with some clever marketing and, well, some more clever marketing. Nintendo milks everything it can get out of its current console before launching a new one at the last possible moment, and getting a nice profit from it thanks to a few excellent games and the appearance of the word 'Nintendo' on the front.

Sony and Nintendo won't mind following this pattern at all, leaving Sega frustrated at being the company which makes Sony's and Nintendo's mistakes for them – all over again. Call me cynical, but I don't think the quality of hardware or even the games can affect this. When did it ever affect sales in the past?
Graham Courtney, E66

While re-reading E58, I noticed on the letters page a contribution from one Robin Jubber claiming to be "the most anally retentive email ever." The email pointed out **Edge**'s error in claiming that the initial ship in *Elite* was a Viper, and correctly stated that the Viper was of course the police ship. However, it went on to say that the ship which launched Commander Jameson's trading career was the Cobra Mk II.

As any true *Elite* fan will gladly point out, the actual ship which graced our Cub monitors was in fact a Cobra Mk III, as the Mk II was abandoned at the prototype stage.

Oh, and if there's ever been a more anal-retentive email than this, I'd love to see it.
Ron Picnic, E67

Congratulations on your 'Spuri OS' story [News, **E**70] – it was the best April Fool I've read, and it convinced quite a few of my friends.
Steve, E71

Following the boneheaded remarks made in **E**70's Viewpoint (Stephen Mackintosh debating *Sonic Adventure*'s 8/10 score), is it time for a resurrection of the 'review scores' debate?

Sooner or later some brave print publication has to take the plunge and ditch the troublesome, misleading system of points and percentages in reviews. I'd love to see it happen in the next five years, but there seems to be a huge amount of resistance to the idea. Perhaps given the sub-GCSE writing ability of many game journos, the thought of having work assessed on the basis of written word alone is a tad threatening? Or perhaps the masses really aren't ready for such a radical concept? Whatever the case, I suspect **Edge**'s staff have a few GCSEs between them, and your readership to be anything but 'the masses'. Go on, give it a try.
Nick Ferguson, E72

There's one thing that Sony has brought into the videogaming community which makes games not special any more – and that's the casual gamer. These are the type of idiots who buy every copy of *FIFA*, *Tomb Raider*, *Crash Bandicoot* and other crap games like *Syphon Filter* and *Grand Theft Auto*. Sony has brainwashed everyone, including teenagers and young adults, into buying stupid, hyped-up games like *Driver*.

Sony doesn't care how crap games are for the PlayStation. It seems to be concentrating on quantity rather than quality, and that's why we get very few great games like *Gran Turismo*, *Tekken 3* and *Metal Gear Solid*.
Trung On, E75

"Sony doesn't care how crap games are for the PlayStation. It seems to be concentrating on quantity rather than quality, and that's why we get very few great games"



The initial claims made by Demis Hassabis for *Republic*'s 'Infinite Polygon Engine' aroused the ire of coders, who proceeded to give him a hard time

Mr Trung, I am a PlayStation owner and would welcome the opportunity to explain the virtues of this excellent (if slightly dated) console to you with the help of my friend, Mr Baseball Bat.
Nick P, E76

I await with interest evidence of young Mr Hassabis' Infinite Polygon Engine and the changes to humanity's understanding of the laws of physics that it will bring about.

I have been working on something which may also be of interest to you. I call it the Infinite Monkey Engine. I have developed a method of ensuring that all in-game characters will react completely realistically to any situation with which they are presented. I have achieved this by creating a number of independent agents equal to the number of possible situations which can arise within the game. I call these agents monkeys. At each decision point for a character I simply locate the monkey which has been presented with the character's particular situation and apply that monkey's actions.

As the game environment becomes more complex, I increase the number of monkeys under consideration. Ultimately I will have an infinite number of monkeys to choose from, carrying out an infinite number of actions. It's inevitable that one of them will be found to spew out a column of self-serving claptrap on a monthly basis. He will rightfully be declared Monkey King and worshipped by all. Good for him!

Actually, an Infinite Polygon Engine is easy – all you need is either an infinitely slow framerate or an infinitely long preprocessing time. Or maybe just a good marketing department.
G Ushaw, E79

Let's face it, everybody loves reading a '100 Best Games' feature, but nobody ever agrees with them – a wise man once said, "Opinions are like arseholes – everybody's got one."
MR, E82

The 'Size Matters' article in **E**82 raised one of the most relevant and interesting gaming issues for some time. I would regard myself as a keen gamer and devote as much time to games as is possible, considering I have to fit career and drinking into the equation. You made me analyse which titles I find myself returning to. Titles such as *Tekken 3*, *GT2* and *Mario 64* never gather dust for good reason. Despite their size and complexity, they are all easily played in bite-size chunks: a few hours at a time. Titles such as *FFVIII* and even *Zelda 64* require days at a time to really get into. Make games as big as you like, but they need to be easy to return to.
David Walker, E84

I wonder how many people have responded to your first PS2 reviews. As many as those who have been complaining at your alleged PS2 bias? Never mind, you know you'll never win.
Nathan Baseley, E86

It seems to me that Phil Harrison's arguments in favour of a "new methodology" ['The future of PlayStation2', **E**85] do not really bear close scrutiny. What he says, in essence, is that in order to maximise the potential of the PS2 coders have to come to terms with a 'synthesis' programming model. No doubt this is true but it does not mean that the synthesis model is a desirable method of programming.

The traditional methodology (as employed in PCs, Dreamcast, Xbox, and probably Dolphin too) is already far in advance of PS2's capabilities. The current nVidia-class GPU coupled with a decent CPU and a hatful of RAM easily outclasses the PS2. The bottom line is that the PS2 is a weird machine that requires a weird approach to tap its power.

And for all Harrison's groovy techno-babble, the PS2 remains an eccentric middling performer. The difference is that unlike most funny bits of kit, there'll be a PS2 in every darned living room in the world. It is this that attracts the developers, not the 'opportunity' to blow their (and our) minds with a new methodology.
Jake, E86

And I thought you had something against Sega. How wrong I was. Reading **E**84 I am convinced you have a grudge against all the consoles that have ever been released.
Ronald Kattevilder, E87

It seems to me that PlayStation2 is in some danger of becoming the next Sega Saturn – the kind of statements that are being made at the moment by prominent developers are eerily reminiscent of the criticisms of architecture and feature set that buried thirdparty support for the Sega machine, and I wonder if software for the machine will be so forthcoming once initial commitments are out of the way. Xbox, on the other hand, is looking very much the modern PlayStation. Could history be about to repeat itself
Joshua Evans, E88

Jake's letter in **E**86 missed the fundamental point behind 'the synthesis model'. This type of methodology is essential if three-dimensional videogames are to massively increase the complexity of game environments.

Graphics power and CPU power now massive outstrip the performance of memory, while there will never be sufficient memory available to accurately model complex environments without imposing limits on the player area and the player interaction therein.

It is because of this that I believe the PS2 has the most promising potential of any of the next-generation game boxes. Xbox's geometry prowes is relatively specific and locked into the rendering pipeline, so that even if the X-chip lives up to its specs it will not be as well suited to pushing dynamic geometry, a limitation of nVidia chips.

The PS2 architecture is no bodge job (unlike th Saturn), rather the first attempt by a consumer manufacturer to encapsulate the

"And I thought you had something against Sega. How wrong I was. Reading **E**84 I am convinced you have a grudge against all the consoles that have ever been releasec

Apart from *Gran Turismo 3* and *Metal Gear Solid 2*, what has the PlayStation2 ever done for us? Apart from *Rez*. And *Ico*. And *Grand Theft Auto III*. And...



ideas espoused in Diefendorff and Duby's concept of a "dynamic media machine."
Gary Moran, E88

I think the reason many people are disappointed with the capabilities of the PlayStation2 is not because the machine itself is underpowered, but that the promises made by Sony were so extravagant. The company set the bar way too high with its prerelease publicity and the PS2 couldn't possibly live up to the expectations that people had.

But the PS2 is still a good machine. The reality is that the PS2 is in the same league as the Dreamcast – a little better in some areas, a little worse in others. And what's wrong with that? People wouldn't feel so disgruntled if Sony hadn't exaggerated the PS2's abilities to such an outrageous degree.

It's time to come back to Earth and appreciate PS2 for what it is: a terrific console that will provide good-looking games – at least until Xbox and GameCube come along.
George Miralles, E90

In response to Gavin Hodgson (inbox, **E**90), who laments the apparent failure of Nintendo to grow up, I would say to him and anybody else that you are really fooling yourself if you believe there is any such thing as an adult game, apart from *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*.

I mean, let's be honest, is there anything particularly grown up about pretending to be a top secret spy, infiltrating a secret lab? Ask Jenson Button how grown up he finds the latest Formula One games with their really realistic graphics.

Don't get me wrong, I love videogames, but I don't kid myself into thinking they are something more than they are. My girlfriend and the majority of my friends see nothing particularly adult about me spending hours on a game trying to get the Mitsubishi Lancer with all the trick bits.

Let Nintendo keep making its fantastic, fun games so that I don't have to worry about whether I'm an adult or not; I'd rather be a little elf chap who has to save a princess.
Jamie Barker, E92

I am concerned that **Edge** might have unwillingly positioned itself so that it is unable to report on the next big gaming revolution. I am talking about handhelds – GBA, Wonderswan Color, that Ericsson/Lynx thing, WAP, etc.

Many industry types are expecting this to be the next mass market for gaming – perhaps on a scale never seen before, but **Edge** might not be there. By setting out your stall as being on the cutting edge of new technology, these 8- or 16bit, relatively low-tech devices do not fall within your chosen area. If PlayStation2 suffers from a lean first year you might need something to fill in the gaps until the next, next generation comes along in the autumn.
Mat Taylor, E93

It would be interesting to be a fly on the wall of the Sony Computer Entertainment boardroom, and to watch a bunch of executives sweating over how to rescue their $300m moribund videogame system. The sad facts behind the inevitable failure of PlayStation2 are that Sony has learned nothing from the corporation it helped topple: Sega.

The arrogance show by Sony is almost a mirror image of that portrayed by Sega at the launch of the Saturn. It produced an underpowered, over-expensive black box in the belief it had such a hold over the gaming public it couldn't fail.

GameCube will succeed because Nintendo makes amazing toys. That is what this is all about. With the forthcoming *Gran Turismo 3* and *Metal Gear Solid 2* aside, there is little else on the horizon for PS2 owners. Even the massmarket casual gamer appears to be ending its cyclical romance with videogames. Perhaps with the now-ironic thirdparty assistance from Sega, the PS2 may have a chance, but I wouldn't bet on it.
Chris Meyer, E100

I know people call for a more adult approach from Nintendo, but what exactly is Luigi doing behind Mario on **E**100's cover – a spot of plumbing? And them being brothers as well...
Pjaggers, E102

If software prices were around the £20 mark, interest in videogames would see the largest upheaval since the introduction of PlayStation. There's also the matter of what affordable software pricing would do for originality in games. If I wander into a record shop I frequently find myself taking a chance on a CD that I've never even heard of. But equally frequently I leave videogame shops empty handed because of my reluctance to pay the ridiculously high prices.

Essentially I end up buying the genres I know I like – which is the curse of the industry. It inevitably deludes publishers into thinking that this is what gamers want. If software prices weren't so high then I'm sure that I along with many others would be willing to take more risks on a game that I might otherwise have overlooked. And as gamers snap up these more obscure titles, publishers would be able to create new franchises and IP. So if the videogame industry really wants to play with the big boys, it will have to introduce cheaper prices.
Matthew Thompson, E117

What a great time it is to love games. Please **Edge** no more letters from whingers going on about how games are no fun anymore, etc. After over 20 years of serious game playing I can honestly say I have never had it so good. A smorgasbord of great games to play and amazing machines to play them on.
Duncan MacBeth, E120

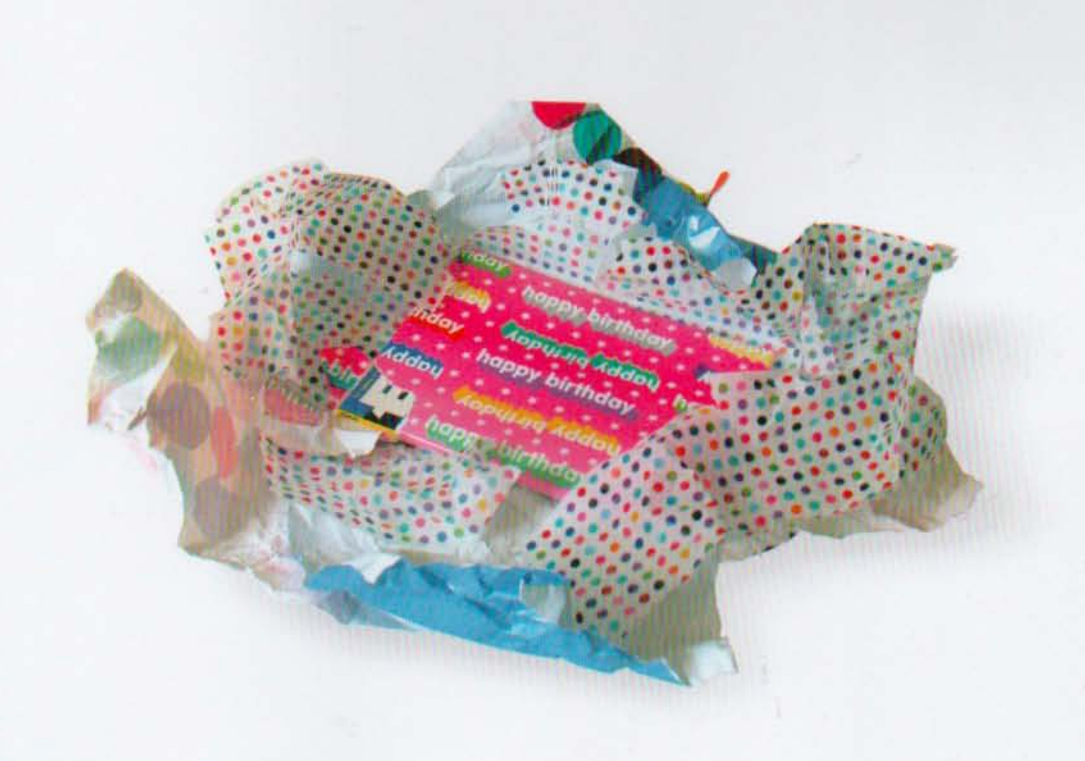
Possibly the greatest proofreading mistake of any magazine, ever. **Edge**, I love you dearly, but I think your production department needs a swift ? up the ?.
Constantine Butler, E125

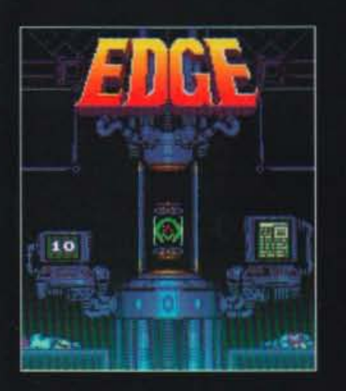
"Let Nintendo keep making its fantastic, fun games so that I don't have to worry about whether I'm an adult or not; I'd rather be a little elf chap who has to save a princess"

Next month

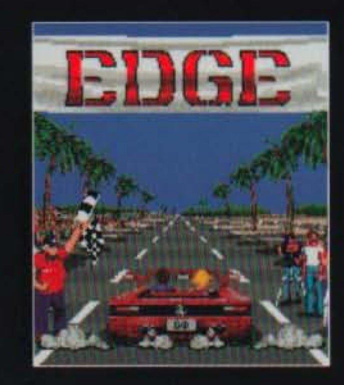


It's about time **Edge** found out what Sonic and co are up to

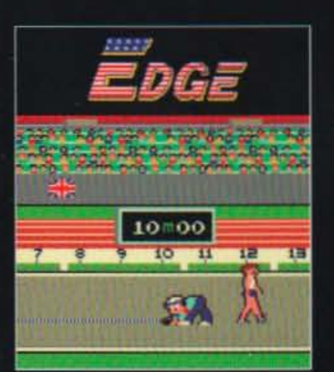

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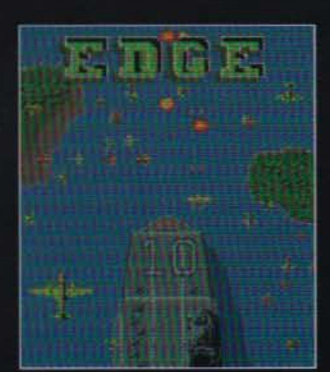


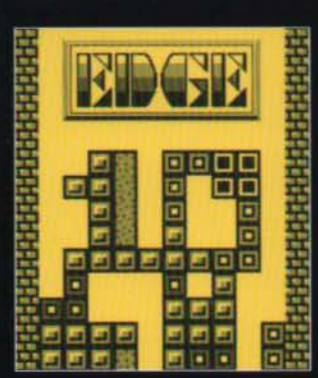














10th anniversary limited edition covers

